
QUOD ADEST GRATUM

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

A Collection

OF THE

MOST INSTRUCTIVE AND AMUSING

LIVES

EVER PUBLISHED,

WRITTEN BY THE PARTIES THEMSELVES.

WITH BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS, AND COMPENDIOUS SEQUELS, CARRYING ON THE NARRATIVE TO THE DEATH OF EACH WRITER.

VOLUME XXXII.—MADAME DU BARRI.

LONDON:

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,

AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXXI.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford-street.

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY THE TRANSLATOR OF "VIDOCQ."

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXXI.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

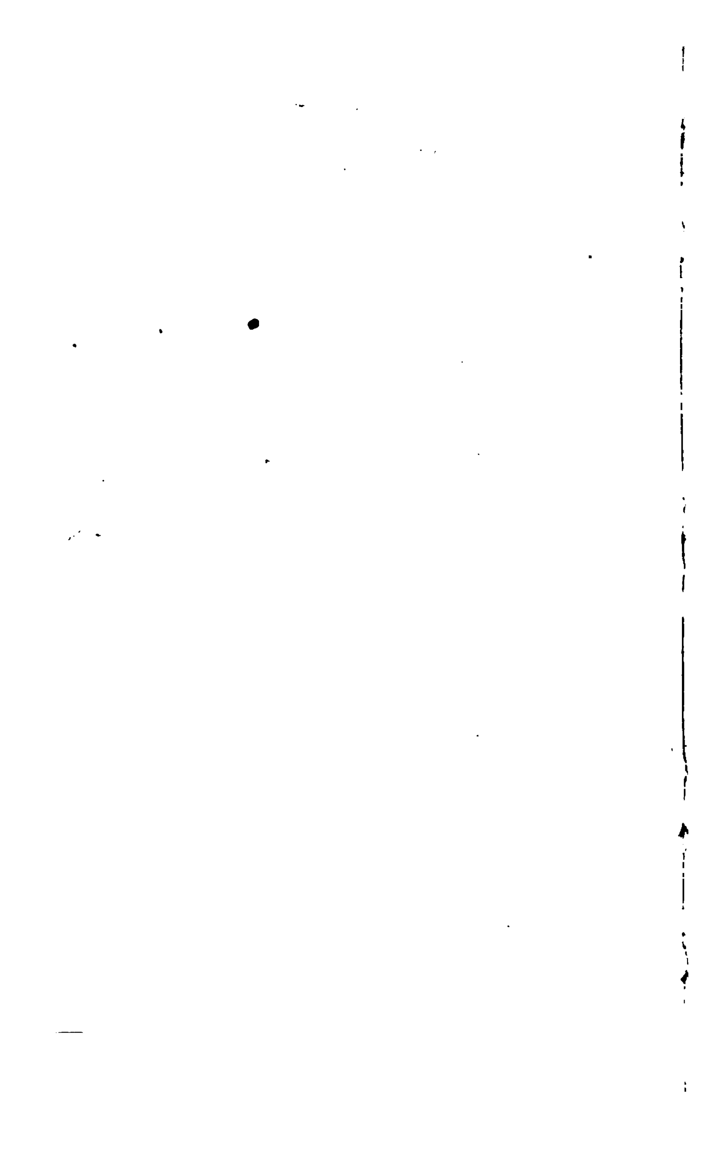
CHAPTER XXV.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHAPTER XXIX.



MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI.

CHAPTER I.

A third letter from the duke—The king receives extreme unction—Letter from madame Victoire to the dauphin—M. de Machault—A promenade with the duc de Cossé—Kind attention from the prince des Deux Ponts. A fourth letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Comte Jean bids me farewell—M. d'Aiguillon's fifth letter, containing an account of the death of Louis XV.—The duc de la Vrillière—The *lettre de cachet*—Letter to the queen—Departure for the abbey of *Pont aux Dames*.

THE account received in the evening from the duc d'Aiguillon I shall not transcribe, as it was merely a repetition of the good tidings of the morning. The day following still brought a continuation of favourable accounts, but the next letter was in these words:—

"MADAM, AND MOST HONOURED FRIEND,—Arm yourself with courage; the king is extremely ill, and I ought not to conceal from you that serious apprehensions are entertained for his life; he has passed a wretched night. His daughters, who never quitted his bed-side, whispered to him that the archbishop of Paris and his grand almoner were in the anteroom if he desired to see them. The king did not seem to hear their words, but about three o'clock in the morning

he called the duc de Duras, whom he bade inquire whether M. Maudoux were in the château; and, if so, to apprize him he wished to speak with him.

"At these words the princesses and all who heard them burst into a fit of weeping, which was only interrupted by the arrival of the confessor, who, approaching the bed-side of the penitent, held a conference with him of nearly a quarter of an hour: this being concluded, the king, in a loud and firm voice, inquired for his almoner. The latter soon presented himself, anxious to discharge the duties of his sacred office. His majesty kept continually repeating to his afflicted children, 'My daughters, why should what I am now about to do agitate or alarm you? You are well aware, that having the small-pox, the etiquette established in my family compels me to receive the last solemn rites of the church, and I but acquit myself of an obligation in submitting to it.'

"The tone in which the king spoke convinced his attendants that he rather strove to re-assure himself than his children, by the persuasion that the receiving extreme unction was not so much the consequence of his own dangerous state as a mere act of obedience to an established custom. It was then decided that the sacred ceremony should take place at seven o'clock in the morning; and here arose some little embarrassment; the ecclesiastics insisting upon the necessity of the king's making some striking and open atonement for what they were pleased to term the scandal of his private life.

"The king's chamber now presented a picture at once solemn and gloomy. Grouped together on one side the bed might be seen the different noblemen in attendance upon his majesty; a little removed stood the clergy, concealed from the invalid by the closely-drawn curtains; in the midst of these contending parties were the princesses going from one to the other, vainly seeking by mild and gentle mediation to produce a satisfactory arrangement. It was at length understood,

that, on account of the extreme weakness of the invalid, the grand almoner should pronounce in his name a kind of honourable apology for past offences.

"You can scarcely imagine, madam, the universal consternation spread throughout the château by the information that the king was about to receive the last rites of his church. The terror and alarm became overpowering for a while, but subsiding into a more religious feeling, crowds of persons followed with solemn reverence the holy procession as it passed along, bearing the holy sacrament to their expiring monarch. At the moment when it was administered the grand almoner, turning towards all present, pronounced the following words in the king's name:—

"'Gentlemen, the weakness of his majesty preventing him from expressing himself, he has commanded me to inform you, that although he is responsible to God alone for his conduct, he yet regrets having caused any scandal to his people by the irregularities of his life, that he sincerely repents of his sins; and, should Providence restore him to health, he purposes living henceforward in all the virtue and morality of his youth, in the defence and maintenance of religion, in preserving a true faith, and in watching over the best interests of his people.'

"Yours, madam, &c. &c."

I learned also, through another channel, that (according to custom) forty hours' prayer had been enjoined in every church in France to implore the mercy of heaven for the king. I heard too that the shrine of Saint Geneviève had been displayed for the veneration of true believers.

I passed a miserable night, dreaming of graves, winding-sheets, and funeral-torches, from which I only awoke to receive the morning's despatches. Alas! the news but confirmed the distressing state of the king. The very solitude in which I was left at Ruel might alone have served to convince me of my misfortune; for, with the exception of the duc de Cossé, no person

came near us. M. de Cossé invited me to walk with him in the garden; I accepted the arm of this noble friend, and we directed our steps towards the wood. When we were there secure from interruption, the duke inquired what were my plans for the future?

"How can I tell you," answered I; "what is henceforward to be my fate is better known to our future queen than to myself."

"That is precisely what I dread," replied M. de Cossé. "Unfortunately you have deeply offended the queen elect, who has irritated her husband's mind against you; and then the Choiseul faction will, in all probability, come into power."

"I see all this," returned I, "and am prepared for whatever may happen."

"I admire your calmness in a moment like the present," cried the duke; "but have a care. Perhaps the best thing would be to remove you beyond the reach of the first shock of court displeasure. In your place I would request passports from the duc d'Aiguillon, and travel into England."

"Oh, speak not of such a thing, I conjure you," interrupted I; "I have a horror of such journies, and would much rather trust to the generosity of the dauphiness. She is about to become a great queen, while I shall be a creature so humiliated and abased, that the very difference between our situations will be a sufficient vengeance in her eyes."

We returned to the house, and had scarcely entered, when M. de Palchelbel, plenipotentiary to the prince des Deux Ponts was announced.

"M. de Palchelbel," cried I, extending my hand, "what good wind brings you here?"

"I have been honoured by the commands of the prince, my master, madam," replied he, "to bring you the assurances of his unalterable friendship; and to say further, that whenever you feel dissatisfied with your residence in France, you will find at Deux Ponts an asylum, which the most earnest endeavours of the

prince, my gracious patron, will strive to render agreeable to you."

I was much affected by this mark of generous regard on the part of prince Charles Auguste; and, turning quickly towards the duke, I exclaimed, "What think you of all this? Will you henceforward believe those self-dubbed philosophers, who assert that friendship is unknown to royalty? you have here a proof of the contrary. For my own part, M. de Palchelbel," continued I, turning towards the minister, "I am much gratified by your message, and entreat of you to thank his royal highness most sincerely for me. I will write to him myself on the subject, but beg of you to repeat that, kind as are his offers, I cannot accept of them; but shall certainly remain in France until the new sovereign commands or permits me to quit it."

I afterwards repeated to the minister of Deux Ponts what I had previously stated in the garden to M. de Cossé, and had the satisfaction of hearing madame d'Aiguillon approve of my sentiments.

When I retired to my apartment I was followed by my niece.

"How happy are you, dear aunt," said she, "to preserve such friends in your present troubles."

"I owe them," replied I, "to my simplicity and candour."

"Will you not retire to Germany?"

"Certainly not," answered I.

"Yet it would be better to allow the first burst of displeasure on the part of the dauphiness to pass over."

"Who gave you this counsel, my dear niece? for I am quite sure it does not originate in yourself."

"I had promised not to tell," answered she; "but if you insist upon it, I must confess, that I was persuaded by the prince de Conde and M. de Soubise to urge you to follow it."

"Do they then wish for my absence?" inquired I, angrily.

"Only for your own sake, dearest aunt."

"I thank them; but my resolution is formed to commit myself entirely to Providence in this melancholy affair."

The day passed on; and with feverish impatience I waited the arrival of the next courier: he came, at length, and confirmed my worst fears; the king was entirely given over by his physicians, and his dissolution was hourly expected. The letter containing this mournful tidings concluded thus:—"I have just seen comte Jean, he is here incognito. We had entirely forgotten that passports would be necessary; however, I have now furnished him with four for England, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. The count is far from partaking of your sense of security, and is wisely anxious (as I think) of shielding himself from the first burst of royal vengeance. The duchess has informed me of your refusal of an asylum at Deux Ponts; and, while I admire your courage, permit me to add, that you should rather have listened to the dictates of prudence than magnanimity under present circumstances."

The following morning, at an early hour, comte Jean entered my chamber, saying,

"I understand the king is dead; have you heard any thing of it?"

"Were the report correct," answered I, "I should have known it ere the intelligence reached Paris."

"Well, living or dead, I am advised to keep out of the way; and this night will see me on my journey from Paris. Will you accompany me?"

"No," replied I; "I have refused travelling with a much more creditable companion than yourself."

"There you are wrong then; for, depend upon it, a cloister will be your fate: at any rate, my business here is at an end. The new monarch is young, and attached to his wife, and my daughter-in-law is too great a simpleton to be turned to any account at court."

My brother-in-law then requested I would furnish

him with money. I gave him what I had, and placed in his hands diamonds to the value of 30,000 francs, He was very anxious to obtain all my jewels, under pretence of conveying them safely out of the kingdom, but this I was too wise to agree to; he would have staked them at the first gaming-table he met with. We separated without much emotion on either side. He next took leave of Chon and his daughter-in-law; the former wept bitterly, for she was a most excellent and amiable girl; but the latter, who knew but too much of the villainy of her father-in-law, could scarcely repress her joy at his departure. Comte Jean perceived it; and, according to his brutal custom, indulged in a coarse jest at her expense; for one of his maxims was to hold all women in sovereign contempt but such as could be useful to him. For my own part, his absence gave me something like a feeling of pleasure; his presence was wearisome to me; it was like the dregs of the cup which had intoxicated my senses.

During the day several false reports arrived of the death of the king; but at length, about half past four o'clock in the afternoon I received the following letter:—

"MADAM,—You have lost your best friend and I an excellent master: at three o'clock this day his majesty breathed his last. I can scarcely describe to you the horrors of his death-bed. The princesses Adelaide and Sophie braved the frightful contagion to the last, and never quitted him till the last spark had flown. Alas! with the exception of themselves, every attendant openly expressed their weariness and disgust.

"For several days the physicians have forbidden the windows to be opened; and those condemned to inhale the pestilential vapour of the room vainly sought to counteract them by every powerful fumigation. Alas, madam, what is a king when he can no longer grasp the sceptre? How great a leveller is death! The prelates had abandoned the sick chamber, and left a simple curé of the chapel to take their place; the lords in

waiting and other officers shrunk from the duties of their office, and, with their eyes fixed on a time-piece, eagerly awaited the hour which should free them from it. The princesses, who perceived this impatience, durst make no complaint, while the king, occasionally recovering his senses, uttered broken sentences, expressive of the religious terror which had seized his mind. At length, at a few minutes past three o'clock, Lemonnier, in his capacity of first physician, said, after laying his hand upon the heart of the patient, and placing a glass before his lips, 'THE KING IS DEAD.' At these words all present strove with indecent haste to quit the chamber; not a single sigh, not one regret was heard. The princesses were carried insensible to their apartments.

"The extinction of a bougie, which had been placed in a certain window, announced the accession of the dauphin ere the duc d'Aumont had informed him of the decease of his august grandsire."

This letter wrung from me some bitter tears, as well for the king, who had so lavishly bestowed his affections upon me, as for myself. What would now be my fate? Alas! I knew not; all my brilliant prospects were buried in the coffin of my late protector.

The duc d'Aiguillon arrived at Ruel about midnight; he, as well as the other ministers who had been about the late monarch during his last illness, being prohibited by etiquette from following the present monarch to Choisy, whither the whole of the royal family had retired for a few days. He told us that the duc d'Aumont, having commanded La Martinière to proceed with the embalming of the royal corpse, that physician replied, "Certainly, my lord, it shall be done if you command it, but, in that case, the duties of your office compel you to receive his majesty's bowels in a golden dish; and I protest, that such is the state of the body, that of all who may assist at the operation, not one will survive eight days. It is for your grace to determine what shall be done."

M. d'Aumont thought no more of embalming his late master, but gave orders for the body being immediately placed in a leaden coffin, from which there still issued a frightful effluvia.

Up to the moment of my quitting Ruel madame de Mirepoix gave me no token of recollection: I heard that herself and the prince de Beauvau were reconciled, and for her sake I rejoiced at it. No person came near us the whole of the day with the exception of M. de Cossé, and I sat in hourly expectation of some order from court. At length we descried a travelling carriage with six horses, proceeding at a rapid pace up the avenue. "I know that livery," exclaimed I; "'tis that of my humble adorer, my obsequious slave, my friend at court, the duc de la Vrillière, commonly called *le petit saint*. You see that the good soul could not delegate to another the pleasing task of arresting me; but permit me to retire to my apartment; it is fitting he should seek me there if he has any communication to make to me." The duchess approved my resolution; and the duc de la Vrillière having been introduced into the salon, after the first compliments, requested to see me, that he might acquaint me with the king's pleasure.

Mademoiselle du Barri undertook to inform me of the duke's arrival.

"You were not mistaken dear sister," said she; "the duc de la Vrillière is the bearer of the king's orders respecting you: but compose yourself, I beseech you."

"Fear not," said I; "I am as calm as you would have me. Tell the vile dissembler, I mean the duke, I await him."

M. Tartuffe was but a faint copy of *le petit saint* as he presented himself before me. His manners still retained part of their former servility, but there was a lurking smile about him, which proved how well he was pleased with the part he had to perform.

He approached me with lingering steps and an air

of mysterious importance, while a sort of sardonic grin contradicted the sorrow he endeavoured to force into his countenance. For my own part, I caused the folding-doors to be thrown open, and advancing ceremoniously, stood to receive the orders of the king. I bowed stiffly and silently; and, with something like a malicious satisfaction, I witnessed the embarrassment into which my cool and collected manner threw him.

"Madam," said he at last, "I have a painful duty to perform: in a word, I am the bearer of a *lettre de cachet*."

"Well, sir!" said I, tranquilly.

"Madam, I must request you to believe how greatly I regret the task imposed upon me; but my duty and obedience to the king—"

"Would enable you to strangle your nearest relative. All that is well known; but, in the name of all that is base, cowardly, and unmanly, could no one but *you* be found to remind a distressed and afflicted woman that she has lost her only friend and support?"

"Madam, I repeat, obedience—necessity—"

"Enough, sir; I pity you."

"Madam, you outrage the king in my person."

"No, sir; I respect the king too highly to believe that there could ever be any relation between him and one who is too contemptible to remind me that he was but a few days back the most cringing of my servile slaves."

Le petit saint, boiling with rage, with an unsteady hand, unfolded and read, in a trembling voice, the following words:—

"Madame la comtesse du Barri,—For reasons, which have for their object the preservation of the tranquillity of my kingdom, and the prevention of any state secrets confided to you being promulgated, I send this order for your immediate removal to Pont aux Dames, accompanied by one female attendant only, and under the escort of the exempt who has the necessary orders. This measure is by no means intended

to be either disagreeable or of long duration. I therefore pray God to have you in his holy keeping.

"(Signed) LOUIS."

"That, madam," continued the duke, "is his majesty's pleasure, and you have nothing to do but to submit."

"Your advice was not asked, my lord," returned I; "I honour and obey the king's slightest wish, but your presence is no longer requisite; you will therefore be pleased to rid me of it."

The duke, resuming his air of mock humility, bowed low, and departed.

When I was alone, I must confess a few tears escaped me, but I soon wiped them away; my resolution was taken.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon and my female friends hastened to question me relative to the duke's visit. I showed them the *lettre de cachet*, which confirmed the misfortune they had suspected from seeing Hamoul, who was to be my escort, waiting in the anteroom to conduct me to the abbey of Pont aux Dames, near Meaux, the place of my exile. They all evinced the utmost sorrow, and both Chon and my niece protested that, with the king's permission, they would willingly attend me in my seclusion. I felt grateful for this mark of attachment; then, sending for the exempt, I inquired whether I might be allowed sufficient time to write a letter, and cause a few necessary preparations to be made? "Madam," replied he, "my only orders are to accompany you to Pont aux Dames, the hour of departure is left to yourself."

I then penned a few hasty lines to the king, indicative of my wishes for the happiness and prosperity of his reign, of my ready obedience to his commands, and of my earnest wishes that my sister-in-law and niece might be permitted to visit me. This letter I was promised should be punctually delivered. I had now the painful duty to perform of choosing between Henriette and Geneviève, as only one attendant was

allowed me at Pont aux Dames. Henriette pleaded her claim as my servant, while the excellent Geneviève timidly urged her early friendship. "Let chance decide it," cried I. They drew lots, and Geneviève was selected.

We reached Pont aux Dames in the middle of the night; it was a miserable looking place, which took its date from the time of Saint Louis or Charlemagne for ought I know. What a contrast met my eyes between this ruinous old building, its bare walls, wooden seats, and gloomy casements, and the splendour of Versailles or Choisy; all my firmness forsook me, I threw myself weeping into the arms of Geneviève.

A courier had announced my intended arrival, and I found all the good sisters impatient to see me. What eager curiosity did the pious nuns evince to behold one of whom they had heard so much even in their quiet retreat, and how many questions had I to reply to from those who had the courage to address me. Alas! I of all the throng assembled was the most anxious for quiet and solitude.

I was lodged in the best apartments, which, however magnificent the good people of Pont aux Dames might consider them, were not on a par with the granaries of Lucienne: but complaint was useless, and I could only resign myself to whatever was offered me.

CHAPTER II.

A fit of devotion—Generosity of Marie Antoinette—Letter from the duc d'Aigullon—A visit from madame de Forcalquier.

I WAS then an inhabitant of a cloister! what a termination for a life like mine! Yet, amidst all my regrets,

a still small voice seemed to whisper that Providence might have conducted me thither for my eternal salvation; and there was something so sweetly calm and angelical in the mild countenances of the nuns, that I could not help envying them the path they had chosen; while I ——a thousand early recollections stole over me of those days of my youthful innocence, when, with all the fervour of an enthusiastic heart, I longed to devote myself to the service of my Creator; but a crowd of worldly reflections quickly dispersed these whisperings of my better angel, and I smiled to find myself capable of so grave and unnatural an idea as that of burying myself in the depths of a cloister.

The loss of my liberty far outweighed in my estimation the loss of my courtly honours, and, like a prisoned bird, to regain my freedom seemed the only aim and end of all my exertions. Love sought to console me by suggesting, that henceforward, no tie would interfere with my passion for M. de Cossé; but the very idea brought with it a torturing uncertainty, as to whether the duke might consider a poor, disgraced favourite still worthy of his love as when she shared the honours of royalty; the question was too painful to be entertained, more especially in the state of desolation in which my misfortunes had placed me.

However, the patience with which I bore my reverse of fortune, and the popularity I obtained among the sisterhood by the ease and affability of my manners, so different from what they had been led to expect, had, very possibly, the effect of shortening the term of my banishment; although I must do justice to the magnanimous conduct of Marie Antoinette, who, at the suggestion of her own noble mind alone, summoned the duc de la Vrillière, and signified her commands that I should be permitted to receive any of my friends or family who might be desirous of bearing me company in the seclusion of Pont aux Dames. This act of royal kindness reached me through the duc d'Aiguillon, who announced it in the following letter; which, as it con-

tains many interesting particulars relative to the court, I shall not hesitate to transcribe.

"MADAM, AND VERY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter to her majesty has met with all the success it deserved, and the queen has issued the necessary orders for permitting any of your family to join you whenever you are disposed to receive them.

"Many changes have occurred at court even during your short secession from it. The king has selected a mentor in the person of the comte de Maurepas, to whom his majesty wrote as follows:—

"'In the grief which (in common with the whole of my subjects) I suffer from the recent loss I have sustained, my reason points out to me the vast and important duties I have to perform. I am a king ere twenty years have rolled over my head, and I feel that my youth and inexperience loudly call for the counsel and support of such a friend to the nation as you have ever proved yourself. I am deprived of the aid and cooperation of all those able ministers who were with my lamented grandfather during his last illness from the apprehension of their being likely to spread the fatal malady, which, unfortunately for France, has so early seated me on the throne.

"'Let me urge your immediate presence, and by the promptitude of your obedience I shall measure your regard for myself and the nation.

"'LOUIS.'

"Accordingly, the comte de Maurepas arrived here as quickly as his travelling carriage could convey him after the receipt of so pressing a summons. Upon the whole, our party has cause for congratulation at his accession to the office of prime favourite, since it relieves us of all apprehension of the return of the great man from Chanteloup; who (I am told) felt so sure of being invited to make a triumphal entry into Paris, that he had actually remodelled his household upon the strength of his expectations, and engaged a new secretary to lighten his labours.

"The duchesse de Grammont has made her reappearance among us, as if in defiance of the commands of the late king. Alas! poor Louis XV. was not permitted to reach his last asylum in peace; for a tumultuous rabble, with cowardly insolence, followed his corpse to St. Denis, hastening the procession with a most indecent precipitation, as though anxious to hide his remains from the view of those who wished to evince their grateful attachment to what had once been their sovereign.

"I learn that comte Jean has well-timed his flight, since an order has been issued for his confinement."

I heard from mademoiselle du Barri and the vicomtesse Adolphe, who arrived at the same time as this letter, that nothing could equal the rage with which the courtiers attacked all belonging to me; for instance, my sister-in-law, who was maid of honour to the comtesse d'Artois, was compelled to relinquish her title of marquise du Barri and assume that of comtesse d'Hargicourt, and my nephew was obliged to quit Paris in order to escape the tide of popular fury.

The duc de Choiseul, who had so confidently reckoned upon coming into power whenever Louis XVI. should ascend the throne of France, found himself entirely disappointed, and the only favour he could obtain was the revocation of his exile. In vain did the queen exert all her influence over the mind of her august spouse, the king's determination was unalterable. "Never, madam," said he one day in reply to the energetic representations of Marie Antoinette, "never shall he be the minister of the son, who has dared to conduct himself with insolence towards the father. Let me not hear his name again, madam, I beseech you."

I had now spent six days in the convent. Ledoux, my architect, was altering (by permission) a suite of rooms for my use, when one morning, as I was engaged in superintending the work, Henriette came to acquaint me that a young peasant wanted to see me.

"A peasant girl!" exclaimed I, "what can she want?"

"That is more than I can tell, madam;" replied Henriette, "but if you are pleased to see her she can soon inform you."

"Desire her to come to me," answered I, suspecting some mystery. Henriette left the room, and shortly after returned with a female, whose village garb bespoke her of humble origin, had not the elegance of her demeanour and small delicate hands proclaimed the comtesse de Forcalquier. In an instant I recognised her, and throwing myself into her arms, embraced her with every demonstration of joy.

"You see," said she, smiling, "I do not forget my friends in their misfortunes, and the only reason why I have not written to you is, that I wished to surprise you with my presence."

A fresh embrace followed these words; we then seated ourselves and talked over late events and occurrences as though we had not met for an age. I inquired after everybody, particularly the maréchale.

"Which maréchale?" asked madame de Forcalquier.

"My maréchale," answered I, "the maréchale of madame de Pompadour, and the duchesse de Chateauroux."

"Alas!" replied my friend, laughing, "that worthy character is politically defunct. The present king will, in all probability, have no occasion for her services, and madame de Mirepoix, whilst awaiting the chance of being again called into office by our sovereign's taking unto himself a mistress, who may desire her friendship, has deemed it advisable to sign a treaty of reconciliation with her brother, and they actually exchanged the kiss of peace without biting off each other's ear! Has she written to you since the death of the king?"

"Not yet," said I.

"Excellent politician! worthy friend!" exclaimed madame de Forcalquier, whose tone of voice did not

seem calculated to imply that she considered the *fidelity* of this worthy friend among her greatest virtues. We then spoke of the duc d'Aiguillon.

"Why does he remain in Paris?" inquired my friend; any person in his place would have quitted it long ere this.

"He generously stays," returned I, "to watch over my interests."

"Nonsense, my dear, he has no longer the ability to do so; neither the king nor queen can endure him; and besides, think of the new court favourite, M. de Maurepas, surely he will not attempt to enter the lists against him. Should he still delay sending in his resignation, he will be peremptorily called upon to do so. Terray will soon be dismissed; Maupeou will follow him; and *le petit saint* will share the same fate."

I could not prevail upon madame de Forcalquier to dine with me, and she left me full of admiration at the easy and natural manner in which her visit had been conducted. I could have invited her to a well spread board, for I had now my whole establishment at Pont aux Dames, where I kept open house, to the great joy of the sisterhoood, who eagerly flocked to partake of the good things I offered them.

Upon my first coming to this place, my niece had insisted upon bearing me company, but at the expiration of a few weeks, the heroism of eighteen began to cool, and she complained of ennui and languor. I easily divined the cause of her complaint, and urged her to make trial of a purer air, as it was evident the atmosphere of a convent disagreed with her.

"Dear aunt," cried she, looking delighted in spite of herself at my suggestion, "how can I leave you?"

"That you may afford your many friends the happiness of once again seeing the rose recover its station on that pale cheek."

My niece refused to believe she needed any such prescription, and a long discussion ensued, in which I succeeded in vanquishing her scruples, and she was pre-

vailed upon to bid me adieu, weeping at our separation, yet delighted at once more breathing the air of freedom. Poor girl! I could well understand her feelings.

The duc de Cossé was not the last to present himself at the grate of the convent, but at my request he followed the plan of madame de Forcalquier in wearing a disguise. How justly had I estimated this excellent man, and well did his many noble and exalted virtues merit the pure and undivided love I bore him. Up to the present hour he has been my friend, my support, my consolation amidst all the trials and vicissitudes I have undergone; but my obligations to M. de Cossé are greater than this. The king only raised me to his throne, but M. de Cossé elevated me to a level with his own generous and exalted mind, by associating me in his virtuous and dignified sentiments. Doubtless age and experience have greatly tended to effect the change I am conscious of in myself, but yet I feel that the subdued and chastened light in which I now view occurrences is more to be attributed to the improving society of such a friend.*

* The duc de Cossé Brissac (Louis Hercule Timoléon) well deserved the high partiality with which madame du Barri regarded him.

Appointed in 1791 commander-in-chief of the constitutional guard of Louis XVI., he was one of the most faithful defenders of the monarchy, and perished at Versailles in the famous massacre of September; after having long and courageously repulsed his assailants, he was cut down by a blow from a sabre. The gallant reply he made to some person, who had, previously to this period, been complimenting him upon his generous and loyal conduct, is well known, "I merely pay the debt I owe to the ancestors of my king and myself!" His bleeding head was brought to madame du Barri, as a fearful intimation of what she had herself to expect.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER III.

Ennui—Recreations—Prayer—Employment—Reading—Romances—A letter from madame de Forcalquier—Departure from the convent.

You ask me, my friend, to give you an account of the manner in which I passed my time after descending the elevated rank in which a monarch's favour had placed me. Well then, to proceed with my narrative, I soon found, spite of the enthusiasm which was beginning to dawn within my breast, that a convent was not the theatre for my happiness; and although I essayed to pray, my heart clung too closely to the pleasures of this world to be enabled to pray with sincerity for the power of renouncing them. In order to drive away the ennui, which was rapidly seizing upon me, I sought the occupation of the needle, but, weary and listless, I seemed to have lost all power to use it.

I tried what reading would do, and covered my tables with all the works of prose and verse which had appeared since La Harpe wrote his complimentary sketches, or Dorat gave his madrigals to the world, but the spirit of ennui held dominion over me, and the scarce opened book fell from my languid and nerveless fingers. Alas! how well did this indifference to all intellectual enjoyment prove to me my own unworthiness of the many eulogies with which the literati of the day had lauded my taste for the belles lettres and exquisite judgment in all relating to the fine arts. Senseless creature that I had been so eagerly to swallow the flattery which was so largely administered by all who surrounded me. At Versailles my least word was caught up and repeated as the effusion of the most brilliant fancy, and many were the elegant *bon mots* circulated in the morning as having been uttered

by me the preceding evening, when, in reality, I could not remember ever having pronounced them. Still, my gratified vanity was easily induced to attribute them, as others did, to my own lively and exuberant wit; while here, at Pont aux Dames, I spoke in vain; the insensible nuns appeared wholly unconscious of my claims upon their admiration.

In this manner did I pass my time, when one day relieved the tedious weariness of my confinement by bringing me a letter from madame de Forcalquier; it was as follows:—

"My dear countess,—Victoria! Your enemies are weary of persecuting you, and the displeasure with which our illustrious queen once regarded you has passed away. The present alone will live in her recollection, and fate seems again disposed to befriend you. Your friends have been unremitting in their endeavours to interest M. de Maurepas in your behalf; he is an excellent man, and has succeeded in obtaining the following concessions for you. You have the royal permission to quit the cloister in which you are at present immured for the purpose of establishing yourself in any spot which may be agreeable to you, within ten miles of Paris or Versailles. The prohibition, as to reappearing at court, will be speedily withdrawn; so let me pray of you not to object to submitting to what is merely intended, like your present residence, as a trial of your obedience. Money will be furnished you for the purchase of any estate you may select.

"Monsieur proposes to purchase your hotel at Versailles for the value affixed on it by his agents and yours; this sale will put you in possession of a considerable sum of ready money, which you can, no doubt, turn to immediate account.

"Thus then, my dear countess, does fortune open to you an opportunity of once more shining forth in the world. I need not caution you not to reject it.

"The Grammont and Choiseul party expected great things from the present reign: the duke fondly antici-

pated being restored to the ministry; but, in spite of the earnest pleadings of Marie Antoinette, the king has remained firm, and all she could obtain was his recall from banishment. The new monarch looks upon him with a decided prejudice, almost amounting to aversion; and my own opinion is that the tales invented by the Jesuits of the share this nobleman had in the death of his royal sire have been duly credited by Louis XVI. *Le petit saint* still holds his ground, and the Maurepas family strive to keep him in office on account of the relationship existing between them; but, depend upon it, popular clamour will soon procure his dismissal.

"I am afraid, my dear countess, that M. d'Aiguillon is in a very uncertain and precarious situation; he meets with continual obstacles in the discharge of his duty. The queen will not exchange a word with him, and the king, who bears him no good will, refuses to meet him, and refers him upon all occasions to M. de Maurepas.

"Madame de Mirepoix favoured me with a call yesterday. We talked much of you; and she extolled you to the skies, except in one point—your improvidence. 'Poor madame du Barri,' said she, 'seems to receive with one hand only to waste with the other!' What think you, my dear? has she been particularly famed for her own care and frugality? She has frittered away immense sums, without having the gratification of ever having conferred one obligation, or made a fellow-creature happy. She is now ready to become the sworn friend of the happy person who shall obtain the most unbounded influence over the minds of the king and queen; incessant in her attentions to madame de Maurepas, and equally obsequious to the princesse de Lamballe, who in all probability will be elevate to the rank of prime favourite to her majesty Marie Antoinette.

"The maréchale was aware of my intention of writing to you, and bade me say she should send you a long

letter directly she could find leisure for penning it. For my own part, I can only say that, where inclination guides the pen, time and opportunity will always be found to employ it. Adieu, my dear countess; rely on the sincere regard of,

"Yours, ever faithfully, &c."

I should ill express the delight with which I perused this friendly epistle; for, independently of the pleasure I experienced from my correspondence with madame de Forcalquier, my heart beat with joy at the idea of returning to that world from which I had been so unjustly banished. The gay visions conjured up by this change in my prospects were broken into by the intimation that my solicitor and notary were arrived; the one with the necessary papers for completing the sale of my hotel at Versailles, and the other with the title deeds for the purchase of the estate of Saint Vrain, situated between Orleans and Paris, both transactions requiring my signature ere the transfer or purchase could be completed.

Saint Vrain was a most delightful spot, with a magnificent garden, laid out in the English style, and adorned with statues, fountains, and cascades.

It was not without much regret I bade adieu to the kind sisterhood, whose friendly attentions had justly alleviated the weight of my griefs; but, with many expressions of good will, and a promise on my part of one day revisiting Pont aux Dames, I set out for my new residence.

I subsequently redeemed my engagement to the community of Pont aux Dames; to whom I sent, from time to time, many tokens of my grateful recollection.

Some good-natured souls had been at vast pains to represent me in the most unfavourable colours throughout the neighbourhood of Saint Vrain, but their intended malice only produced the greater advantages to myself; and no sooner had I made my appearance, than each vied with the other in expressing their delight at finding me so very unlike the creature I had been

described to them. Whoever would become vastly popular in a place, could not adopt a better plan than sending persons to decry and depreciate them; for the judgment of the multitude is sure to be given directly in opposition to the bias intended for it to take—it was so in my case at any rate.

I regulated my establishment upon a scale of elegance and comfort. My table, both at dinner and supper, was prepared for four-and-twenty guests, to whom I did the honours with ease and unaffected hospitality. The noble families of Saint Vrain did not disdain my society, but brought the female part of them to cheer my retirement. Vainly did they seek in me for the bold and shameless woman of intrigue they had been led to expect; vainly did they watch every word which escaped my lips, in expectation of hearing some of those coarse and vulgar sentiments ascribed to me by my enemies. They found a female touched and chastened by the hand of trial, into a character as quiet and subdued as though she had never seen a court. Pardon me, my friend, this self-praise: the determined malice and infamous calumny of my enemies have so blackened my fame, that I may claim indulgence whilst seeking to defend myself from their unjust odium.

I easily avoided all affectation of manner; for by nature simple and unartificial, I shone in all the plain graces of that genuine desire to please which has been aptly defined as constituting true politeness. My popularity became unbounded, and had I been disposed to make an exchange of hearts, my long and almost alarming list of lovers would have afforded me ample choice. Not one of all the surrounding gentry were wanting from the number of those who came to lay their homage at my feet; and happily, amid so many suitors, I was saved the annoyance of being particularly addressed by any one individual.

CHAPTER IV.

The duc and duchesse d'Aiguillon at Saint Vrain—The heroine *malgré elle*—The friendly separation—The bishop of Orleans—That prelate's picture of the new court—The abbé de Jarente—Voltaire—The weathercock of Chanteloupe—The new ministry—Madame du Barri is dissatisfied with Saint Vrain.

My time passed smoothly and peacefully on at Saint Vrain, where I frequently had the happiness of seeing the duc de Cossé, who paid me many stolen visits. I was cheered also by the presence of my ever kind friends, the duc and duchesse d'Aiguillon, who, spite of every attempt to conciliate the new monarch, were sent into banishment and deprived of every post of honour.

I sincerely sympathized with the duke, whose haughty spirit writhed beneath the severity of the blow. Exiled to his duchy in Guienne, he was proceeding thither by the way of Saint Vrain, where I received them with the warmest pleasure. The duchess had many claims upon my gratitude and esteem; her many virtues, her constant kindness, and the heroic manner in which she flew to my succour upon the death of Louis XV., all deserved, and had my tenderest and most respectful recollection.

This lady possessed a mild and tolerant philosophy joined to a lively wit, accompanied by a strong and solid judgment, with a mind that rose superior to all the petty jealousies of her sex. In the first few moments we were alone, I could easily perceive that she entertained a strong dislike to her projected journey.

"How happy are you," cried she, "that the storm has merely cast you on these peaceful shores!"

"Then why should *you* wander from them?" said I.

"You are not included in your husband's banishment; stay with me, I beseech you, and let us mutually console and support each other."

"Indeed, I wish I could, but that odious duchesse de Choiseul——"

"Well, what did she do?" said I.

"She followed her husband to Chanteloupe——"

"Of which she very quickly repented," replied I. "But, my dear duchess, surely you, whose strong understanding has ever guided you rightly until now, need not look for precedents from the actions of others."

"I must confess," cried the duchess, "that I shrink from the thoughts of being immured at Agen; I dislike Guienne and the Gascons, and there is nothing like ennui for overthrowing the most magnanimous resolutions in the world."

My poor friend, with all her virtue, was not celebrated for her attachment to her husband, but her marriage had been one of those courtly unions in which the heart is wholly left out. Still, a kind of false shame withheld her from explaining her repugnance to accompany the duke, and after having made every arrangement for the journey, she feared to express her weariness at the first stage.

I took upon myself the office of speaking to the duke upon the subject, and seeing him approach us a few minutes afterwards, I requested madame d'Aiguillon to leave me, while, under pretence of showing the duke some improvements that were going on, I led him away to another part of the grounds. He offered me his arm, and we walked some little distance, when my companion began the conversation by speaking of his attachment for me, and regret at quitting me. I skilfully turned his ideas into another channel by alluding to the queen; one word was sufficient. Rage and fury took possession of him, and with the most violent and vehement expressions, he protested his eternal enmity to Marie Antoinette, whom he accused of having brought about his disgrace. I was

grieved to hear the duke profess such sentiments, for I must confess, the generous interference of the queen on my behalf, had strongly disposed me to love and serve her; and I esteem it happy for the honour of the duke that he died previously to the horrible days of revolutionary fury in which I now write, or heaven only knows to what an excess his thirst for vengeance might have conducted him. When the first burst of his feelings had subsided, I said,

"I fear madame d'Aiguillon will lead a dull life either at Agen or Aiguillon."

"It is her own fault," returned he, "why does she insist upon following me?"

"Because she believes it to be her duty."

"Has she, then, ever been so careful in the observance of her duty that she cannot dispense with a strict observance of its dictates upon the present occasion?"

"And would you," said I, "pardon her were she to excuse herself from following you to Guienne?"

"She would considerably oblige me by remaining at home. Aiguillon has great need of repairs and alterations, and it would greatly alleviate my own annoyances, if she could be prevailed upon to defer her journey thither until they are completed."

"Do you think she would be comfortable here?"

"I only wish you could prevail upon her to become your guest."

"Be under no fears on that account," answered I, "I will answer for her prompt compliance with your wishes, for, *entre nous*, they happen to be her own likewise."

"And why could she not have told me so at once?" exclaimed the duke, impatiently; "I can only say, it will be a great relief to me to leave her behind, for it was equally repugnant to me as to her that she should share my exile."

In mutual good humour we reached the castle, where M. d'Aiguillon, with graceful ease and polite-

ness, requested the duchess to lay aside her design of accompanying him, and to pass the ensuing summer at St. Vrain. The duchess yielded with the air of one who makes a great sacrifice, and the duke shortly after bade us adieu, the orders of the king not allowing a longer sojourn.

Among the visits I received, I may instance one from the bishop of Orleans, (M. de Jarente,) late minister of church benefices, but dismissed from office about the same period as the duc dé Choiseul; this prelate, while he attributed his exile to me, was yet too gallant to resent it when he heard that I had come to reside in his neighbourhood. His unexpected presence caused me very little embarrassment, for he was too polite to recur to the past, and accordingly we conversed together like old friends. The bishop appeared perfectly acquainted with all that was going on at court, and said to me,

"We have now a young king of excellent and upright intentions, but whose diffidence and mistrust of himself will prevent his ever carrying his wise designs into execution He believes all about him to mean as well as he does, and gives way to those who are far less qualified to judge than himself. Another misfortune is that no person at court possesses sufficient candour and frankness to warn him of those defects he really labours under, and his rude, unpolished manners and coarse vulgarisms of expression, are rather encouraged and admired than judiciously repressed. In fact, the mentor he has chosen rather requires a tutor over him, than is qualified to guide and direct so youthful a monarch.

"I see another coming evil too: the queen, who is reported to have received an excellent education under the auspices of her august mother, is anxious to get the sovereign sway into her own hands, and this will involve her in a deadly struggle with the ministry, who have somewhat of a similar design upon the reins of empire. The first place at court, however, is still

vacant—I mean that of a female friend for his majesty, whose taste is said to incline towards the princesse de Lamballe, but whether or no the *liaison* will be perfected I know not;—in a word, the court of Louis XVI. seems at present one vast scene of intrigue and profusion, where courtiers meditate upon ambitious plans and schemes in the midst of fêtes and pleasures which bid fair quickly to empty the royal coffers."

I could but smile at the idea of present prodigality; I who knew so well how closely the expenditure of the former reign had drained the treasury.

Madame d'Aiguillon, between whom and the bishop of Orleans a violent dislike had existed, now meeting under somewhat similar circumstances, became the best friends in the world. He presented to me his nephew, the abbé de Jarente, whose handsome person and distinguished manners were well qualified to impress strangers with a favourable opinion of him. He possessed a kind of off-hand way of telling a story, and an ease in conversation, which with many passes for wit; but these advantages were highly deceptive, and concealed a mind without truth, honour, or delicacy; and I greatly fear he will never be a worthy representative of his uncle, whose bishopric he will one day succeed to.

His first exploit, when established as a visitor in my family, was to rival my coachman in the affections of a country belle, and thereby cause a degree of scandal which compelled both myself and his uncle to interfere. To my remonstrances he answered in a manner that highly offended me. His uncle, who saw my displeasure, then took up the affair, and after a long rebuke, ended by saying, "Nephew, respect yourself, if you would have others do so; and so long as you remain in the subordinate ranks of the clergy, remember to select your mistresses from those whose birth is superior to your own. It will be time enough for you to descend in your choice when you shall be exalted to the episcopal chair."

I could but smile at this manner of moralizing—the

only one either uncle or nephew comprehended. However, they both quitted Saint Vrain on the following day, and decency once again was restored to my household."

About this time I experienced a sincere mortification from the total forgetfulness of M. de Voltaire. This philosopher, whose experience of the vicissitudes of life might have rendered him fully capable of sympathizing with me in my present reverse of fortune, treated me with complete neglect, and although I wrote and sent many messages by persons going to Ferney, he seemed scarcely able to recollect ever having heard of me. But why should I complain? did he not evince precisely the same convenient memory to M. de Choiseul, who avenged himself in the following ingenious manner. He caused an exact likeness of the countenance of M. de Voltaire to be placed on a tower at Chanteloupe, where it served as a weathercock! Had not M. de Choiseul appropriated the ingenious idea to himself, I should certainly have adopted it: as it was, I contented myself with treating the time-serving philosopher with all the contempt he deserved, until at the period when he came to pass his last days at Paris, then my resentment vanished, and we met again. The particulars of our interview you shall have in its proper place.

The chancellor Maupeou, at length dismissed from office, refused to concur in his removal from place. "Never," said he, "will I give up my robe and insignia of office; force alone shall deprive me of it. Let me be adjudged by the laws of my country, and we shall see whether I am guilty of any act by which I have forfeited my right to hold my post."

I must do *my cousin* the justice to say, spite of the little love I bore him, that if he were a rogue, he was one of those firm, bold, and collected villains invaluable on the eve of a revolution. His retreat was the signal for the restoration of the ancient magistracy.

The new ministers took possession of their several offices: the great seal was bestowed upon M. Hue de

Miroménil; the finance department was given to M. Turgot, a most worthy and disinterested man, upright in principle, and unable, in the simplicity of his own heart, to comprehend that the divine right of kings gave them the privilege of confiscating the nation's wealth to their own individual gratifications; his uncompromising virtue made him resist all the attempts of court favourites to drain the public treasury, and—he was dismissed his charge.

The abbé Terray was an object of general dislike and contempt, and upon his disgrace was overwhelmed with lampoons, caricatures, and satires. For my own part, I felt but little pity for him, from the recollection of his having exerted himself so actively to substitute his natural daughter in my place. His conduct upon that occasion seemed to me without the least excuse; for in establishing myself at Versailles I had usurped no person's right, and any attempt to dispossess me of what I had so fairly acquired seemed the very blackest species of treason.

M. de Sartines was removed from the head of the police to the war office, where he acquitted himself very respectably.

The coronation took place this year. The cardinal de la Roche Aymon, whose good fortune was by no means the consequence of superior abilities, performed the sacred ceremony; not in his capacity of grand almoner to the king, but as archbishop of Rheims. Old and infirm, his courtier-like spirit still sustained him, and enabled him to go through the fatigues of the day. In the course of the evening the king expressed his fear that he was weary. "By no means, sire," returned the courtier, with much naïveté, "I am ready to perform my task over again."

I had now been long enough at St. Vrain to become heartily weary of it, and ardently to desire a change. The country is charming, no doubt, in the landscapes of Poussin, Bergheim, or Claude Lorraine, in poetry, and on the stage, but dull and uninteresting to those

who are compelled to look on green fields, when they sigh for chambers hung with velvet; and instead of seeing a thousand mirrors reflect their charms, must be content with viewing their features in some running stream. In addition to my distaste for sylvan beauties, the damps and exhalations from the marshy ground surrounding my estate, engendered a contagious malady, which quickly spread among my domestics. My terror of being similarly attacked increased my horror of encountering the frosts and snows of December. I therefore wrote to all my friends, entreating of them to intercede at court to obtain my recall from exile, but in vain. Hope began to forsake me, when the duc d'Aiguillon wrote me from Agen, saying, that the comte de Maurepas was disposed to be my friend, and that a letter to him might do much. "If that be all," said I, as I perused the welcome epistle, "if that be all, I will not be an hour older ere my letter to the comte de Maurepas shall be on its road to Paris."

CHAPTER V.

Letter to the comte de Maurepas—His gallant reply—A return to Luciennes—Congratulations—A tardy friend—The maréchale de Mirepoix—Edifying maxims.

True to my promise, I seated myself at my writing-table, and immediately dispatched the following letter to the comte de Maurepas.

"Monsieur le comte,—Your own experience of the tedium of an exile may easily dispose you to pity and assist those who are so unfortunate as to be similarly situated.

"Upon the death of the late king I was banished to a convent under the pretext of preventing my betraying any state secrets. Alas! such has been the carelessness of my life, and habitual indifference to all around me, that even had I learned any important secret, with my accustomed volatility, it would have escaped my recollection the next hour.

"Of all the events of my late rank I remember but three; the kindness of the deceased monarch, my own unjust behaviour towards the dauphiness, and the generous magnanimity of the queen to myself.

"Had I been disposed to reveal any of the important matters I am supposed to be so well acquainted with, I could surely have done so as easily at Pont aux Dames or my present residence as at Luciennes or Versailles. Now, as the reason assigned for my banishment ceases, upon consideration, to be a reasonable motive for depriving a fellow-creature of her liberty, I address you, sir, to solicit your kind mediation in obtaining of their majesties my full pardon. Believe me, your goodness will not be thrown away upon an ungrateful heart. I think I may venture to say that the good I endeavoured to do when the power was mine, warrants my expecting to be kindly used in return. Besides, your lordship is possessed of too much talent and good sense to look upon me as an object of fear, and too mueh gallantry to refuse to render any female happy if in your power to make her so.

"My request is to be permitted to reside at Luciennes with permission to visit Paris, without being followed and haunted by the agents of the police. I can assure you, that however dangerous I may have proved myself to the hearts of some, I am by no means to be dreaded as regards the peace and tranquillity of the kingdom; at any rate, whatever may have been my faults, I have surely been sufficiently punished, and the most just punishment should have its termination. To you I look, my lord, as a friend and protector in that court

which so loudly proclaims your many virtues and excellent qualities. Believe me,

"M. le comte, yours, &c. &c."

My epistle concluded, I dispatched it immediately by a servant of my own, who was to await at Versailles till M. de Maurepas could send a reply. On the third day he returned, bringing the following billet.

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—Your application has much gratified me. 'Tis not frequently the blooming roses of spring seek the aid of chilling winter. Yes, madam, 'tis indeed time your exile was ended; your gentleness, and the guarded propriety with which you have conducted yourself, have given you just claims on the royal indulgence, and it has been my happiness not to intercede for you in vain. You are now free to proceed to Luciennes or Paris as you prefer.

"Deign to accept my thanks for the flattering sentiments you express.

"I have the honour to be, with profound respect,

"Madame la comtesse,

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"THE COMTE DE MAUREPAS."

I was not long in availing myself of this permission, but quitted St. Vrain with a full resolution of never revisiting it, and hastened to Luciennes, which seemed to me more delightful than ever. I shed tears of joy as I reentered this enchanting abode, but its greatest charm to me was its vicinity to Paris.

The termination of my exile brought around me a crowd of friends, who had kept aloof before from a dread of displeasing the queen. My head grew giddy with the profusion of compliments I received, and when I saw myself once again surrounded by such a train of courtiers, I was tempted to believe the death of the king had been all a dream.

The duc de Cossé was among the earliest of my guests, and he was followed by madame de Forcalquier, who, gay and sensible as ever, recapitulated to me all that was passing at Versailles. I learned with

regret that the queen, far from attracting affection, seemed, each day, to lose popularity. The truth was, the taste of Marie Antoinette led her to desire a select and chosen society, and while some accused her of fastidiousness, others, who envied her the charms of friendship, charged her at once with hauteur and egotism, so true is it that courtly malice is seldom consistent in its accusations.

I learned also that prince Louis de Rohan, upon his return from his embassy at Vienna, could not obtain an audience of that princess, so deeply did she resent the letter he had written me.

The maréchal duc de Richelieu was not the last to present himself; he had lost none of his natural acerbity by the irritation his jealous mind experienced from the manner in which he found himself overlooked at court. The king behaved to him with much kindness, but the queen's dislike gave a tone to the whole body of courtiers, who eagerly evinced their contempt for one who was objectionable in the eyes of their royal mistress.

Scarcely had the first compliment passed between the maréchal and myself, when he exclaimed,

"A promising reign this, truly, when striplings and beardless boys can alone aspire to the honour of their sovereign's favour."

"And yet," said I, "it was the same with each of the three preceding reigns if I understand aright."

"Very different, very different, indeed," sighed the poor duke.

"Simply because, my lord duke," answered I, "you then possessed the favoured age; that is to say, you were what the favourites of to-day may be, some few years younger than you are now."

"Ah, madam, his late majesty understood so well in whom to repose his confidence."

"I, at least, cannot deny the truth of your assertion, my lord," returned I, "since both you and myself were honoured with so large a portion of it."

But the maréchal de Richelieu was not to be diverted from the bitterness with which he contrasted the present reign with those in which his early days had been passed. A heavy gloom overspread his features, and after a silence of some minutes, he rose from his seat, and traversing the room, murmured between his clenched teeth,

"The idiots! to suppose a kingdom could be governed by children, scarcely escaped from their leading-strings. But these days of folly must be at an end, and that shortly."

"My good friend," said I, interrupting his angry soliloquy, "you forget that you must ever be young; do not, I pray you, indulge in so many regrets for the past, or the ladies of the court will begin to fancy you old for the first time, and even detect your silver locks."

This well-timed compliment completely restored the duke to good humour with himself and me, and he repaid the flattery with interest. He next spoke of his son, whom he seemed to regard less than ever, and whom he styled a base calculator upon his fortune and estates. "But," cried he, "I will disappoint the young profligate, for I am but seventy-two years of age, and will marry if but to disinherit him." And then, with an air of the gallantry of his youthful days, the duc de Richelieu kissed my hand and departed.

I had long been looking for a visit from madame de Mirepoix, who, although she sent all kinds of flattering messages by every person who called on me, yet did not herself appear. I could not help feeling much piqued at this coolness on the part of one from whom I had every reason to expect far different treatment.

I was sitting alone one day at Luciennes when the door of my *salon* was thrown open, and the long-looked-for visitant entered. I uttered a cry of surprise, but she, no way embarrassed, ran up to me with her usual vivacity, exclaiming in the same honied voice with which her flattering speeches were wont to be uttered,

"Well, my sweet countess, beautiful and blooming as ever, I declare; upon my word, you have lost nothing since our last interview."

"Pardon me, madam," answered I, drawing back, "I have lost the protection of a powerful monarch, and, as a matter of course, the advantage of your friendship and society."

"My lovely friend," cried madame de Mirepoix, "how can you thus misjudge me? Alas! condemned, as you know, to pass my time at Versailles, I have been prevented from indulging the fondest wish of my heart, that of sharing your hours of seclusion and exile."

"Do you then still love me?" said I, my former resolution all at once forsaking me.

"Assuredly; I have never ceased to do so, and to give you a proof of my sincere regard and attachment, let me at once inquire into the state of your affairs. How are your finances? Have you solicited an augmentation of your pension?"

"And of whom would you have me make such a request?" said I, half stunned with the rapidity with which all these questions were put. "Can I ask the king or the queen?"

"Surely," replied madame de Mirepoix; "the pope himself if it be necessary."

"Still I ought to have some claim upon the persons I thus address."

The maréchale regarded me in silence, and then exclaimed,

"You are, indeed, not changed; still the same thoughtless, reckless creature, who believe disinterestedness to be a virtue; when, in reality, in your situation, it is worse than folly. It is madness to talk of right too! fie, fie, child, such modesty but ill becomes one who must be aware how just are her claims to all that can be done for her."

"Indeed," said I, "I meant——"

"Nonsense!" continued madame de Mirepoix, as if losing all patience; "such ideas may make a pretty

figure in a novel, but recollect that you are neither a Clelia nor a Cornelia. Why, God bless me, have you any taste for being starved to death?"

"Things are not so bad as that yet, my excellent friend," replied I, smiling; "I am not wholly a bankrupt; thanks to your prudent councils, I have saved sufficient from the wreck to keep me from want; but let us change the subject and talk only of your friendship, which is become more valuable than ever to me."

The maréchale took my hand in a caressing manner, and said,

"My dear soul, I fear you may have thought me negligent, but indeed I have only been so in appearance; from time to time I wished to write, and then put it off, hoping to see you; indeed, I dread taking a pen in my hand in days like the present, when every lady is such an adept in epistolary exercises; besides, I have had so many cares, griefs, and chagrins, that day after day has rolled on without my being at liberty to devote one hour to my dear countess. But the court is a blank, a complete void without you; the queen is alive only to the charms of friendship, and his majesty such a second Scipio, that your place will be long unfilled."

"And the princes?" asked I.

"Oh! why monsieur is more gallant than ever, and the comte d'Artois the same child of nature, who pursues each fresh object of his fancy like an infant chasing butterflies, without once fixing his attention upon any one object, and caring for it only so long as the pursuit lasts. Indeed, my dear creature, I am at Versailles a complete piece of mechanism, a body without its animating principle—judge, how sincerely I must regret you."

The conversation of the maréchale resumed its usual ascendency over my mind, and we parted at the end of an hour with many promises on her part of shortly repeating her visit, and with increased admiration on my side for the candid sprightliness of her manners.

CHAPTER VI.

A visit to the duc d'Aiguillon—Chon and Bischi—Death of a prince—The diamonds and the thieves.

When I had enjoyed my liberty for some time at Luciennes, had visited Paris, and satisfied my ardent desire of once more beholding the château of Versailles, which I gazed at through the gate without presuming to enter, like a second Eve, lingering on the borders of a terrestrial paradise, I determined to pay a visit to the duc d'Aiguillon for the purpose of carrying his lady to him, even at the risk of not being a very welcome guest, or of receiving much gratitude for my delicate attention. Ah! had I but undertaken such a journey during my days of favour, how many curious eyes would have sought a view of the illustrious traveller; how eagerly would all the municipal officers of the different towns through which we passed have hastened to present me the customary wine and sweetmeats; however, if I lost these honours, I was freed from the wearisome task of listening to their long and tedious harangues, which my accustomed frankness would not have suffered me to have endured without a hearty yawn.

Wherever we passed, if we did not obtain the homage of princesses, at least, we received at the different inns the treatment usually bestowed upon royal travellers, that is to say, excellent fare and exorbitant bills. At Limoges, by some mistake, I was taken for the duchess, and madame d'Aiguillon for me, whilst the honest townsfolk, as they viewed the rotundity of madame d'Aiguillon, could not but wonder at the late king's taste in choosing a mistress so remarkable for embonpoint.

The duke, wishing, no doubt, to set a good example to his neighbours, and impress his household with a vast respect for his domestic felicity, received his wife and myself with an enthusiastic welcome; his conjugal tenderness was the universal theme, and the healthy appearance of the duchess ascribed to his devoted care and affection.

The proximity of Toulouse brought to Aiguillon an influx of visitors, among whom were my two sisters-in-law, Chon and Bischi, who had been compelled to quit me at the time of my exile. I was truly glad to meet them again, particularly Chon, who was by far the most amiable, as well as clever, of the family. She spoke to me of her brother, who had not presumed to follow me to Agen, until he knew whether he should be an unwelcome visitor to me.

"Pray tell him, my dear sister," said I, "to keep himself quietly at Toulouse. My marriage has realized all he expected from it. I have no longer the means of paying his debts or supporting his mistresses, let me therefore be spared listening to any demonstrations of an affection on his part which must be feigned."

Chon was too honest to be enabled to urge his cause further.

"You are quite right," said she, as she left me, "my brother would ruin you."

Bischi next came to use her eloquence in his behalf.

"Count Guillaume," cried she, "bids me say, my dear countess, that his whole happiness is in the hope of obtaining some share of your affections, some ——"

"Mercy upon us!" I exclaimed, interrupting her, "what nonsense is this? Can you really believe such folly, my dear Bischi?"

"Poor fellow," returned she, "what can he do better than love his own wife?"

"No more of him, I beg," said I.

"But, sister, besides being in love he is in debt."

"Then I am to understand," said I, "that the

passion he has so suddenly conceived for me, arises out of his present embarrassments, and could he but get rid of his debts his love would be disposed of at the same time."

"Nay, sister, but his reputation."

"Let that be his own care, I have enough to do to look after my own."

This manner of arguing did not suit Bischi, whose visit was dictated solely by a desire of coaxing me out of a large sum of money; fortunately for me, Chon arrived in time to free me from this species of persecution, and I bade adieu to my two sisters-in-law.

The château d'Aiguillon was a splendid abode, yet I soon grew weary of it, and fixed an early day for my return to Paris, whither I was called by the impatient jealousy of the duc de Cossé, and a thousand other affairs which I had neglected all the time I was on the spot; however, I made one excursion to Bordeaux, and then set out for Luciennes.

The duchess did not return with me, decorum demanded that she should pass a month or two with her husband ere she again quitted him. I therefore departed, attended only by my two favourites, Henriette and Geneviève, whose attachment never failed me.

During my absence, the archduke Maximilian, brother to the queen, had been to visit her, and had become an object of general dislike from his haughty and ill-bred manners; his reply to the comte de Buffon, who politely offered him a copy of his splendid work upon natural history, "Sir, I could not think of depriving you of it," is the very climax of ignorance and incivility.

About this period I experienced a sincere grief for the loss of the reigning prince of Deux Ponts, he who had so generously adhered to me in my hour of adversity, and offered me an asylum in his country upon the death of Louis XV.

I wrote a letter of condolence to his brother, who

returned me word, that I might rely as fully on his friendship as I had done on that of his deceased brother, the object of our mutual regrets.

Although Luciennes presented a continual succession of guests there were moments in which I was necessarily alone. I have never affected to like solitude, no, not for one minute, and I would prefer the most discordant noise, even the cryings and wailings of a peevish child, to that unbroken silence, when even the echo of our own sighs strikes heavily on the ear; but an unexpected adventure which befell me at this period turned the current of my ideas, and roused me into a spirit of exertion.

I was sitting alone on the morning of the 20th of April, 1779, when I was informed that three persons wished to see me from the princess Sopicha, a beautiful Polish lady, as elegant in mind and manners as she was in person. I had only become acquainted with her since the change in my fortunes, which led me to hope that the friendship she honoured me with was purely disinterested.

I desired that the three visitors should be admitted. One, who seemed to be the principal, was of a middling age, neither remarkable for beauty nor the want of it, he wore an enormously large patch on one cheek, a cross of the order of Saint Louis hung on his breast; his companions were rather better looking, but still labouring under a forced and constrained manner, which gave them the appearance of men placed in a new and strange situation. I invited them to be seated, but they declined. The chevalier de Saint Louis then apprized me, that he was the bearer of a private message of the utmost importance from the princess Sapicha, in which my interests were much concerned, and that he would fain speak to me without fear of interruption.

"And these gentlemen?" inquired I, with much politeness.

"They are merely two Lithuanians," replied he,

" who understand but very little of the French language; but having an ardent desire to see you, the princess, by way of satisfying them, has permitted them to accompany me.

I made no further objection, but rose from my chair and passed into an adjoining boudoir, followed by the chevalier, who had no sooner entered than he carefully closed the door. This act of precaution on his part gave me a feeling of mistrust and uneasiness, which increased so rapidly as I threw my eyes over the countenance of the stranger, that I inquired in a hurried tone what his business with me was. Advancing towards me with a respectful bow, the singular being replied,

" You are somewhat imprudent, madam, thus to trust yourself in the hands of persons whose very names are unknown to you, and this want of caution on your part calls for punishment."

" What is the meaning of all this?" said I, greatly alarmed.

" Merely a trifle," replied my singular visitor, drawing from his pocket a pistol, which he held to my breast; " all you have to do, madam, is to deliver me up your money and jewels immediately. My companions will prevent any person from approaching through your *salon*, and you are beyond the possibility of a rescue; quick then, and, for your own sake, comply with my demand."

Ovecome with terror, I gave myself up for lost, and uttered an incoherent prayer for mercy, to which the robber merely replied, " No delay, madam, time presses, and your life or mine depends upon the dispatch of a moment."

I saw by the ferocious glance with which the wretch regarded me that he was fully equal to performing his threat; but in the midst of my dread and alarm, a single recollection infused fresh courage into me. I remembered with delight that my diamonds were deposited in an iron chest, concealed in a press which

was built behind the wainscot, whilst in my secretaire was a casket worth from about 40 to 50,000 francs, which I was in the habit of commonly wearing, with some trinkets of trifling value; perhaps the whole might amount to 60,000 francs, a sufficient sum to attract the cupidity of robbers. This casket, with several rouleaus of louis, I gave to the villain, who eagerly grasped his prize, filling his pockets, and those of his associates, who had presented themselves at the door of the boudoir; then leading me back to the salon, and compelling me to sit down in an arm-chair, they bound me to it with handkerchiefs in a manner that caused me the severest pain.

"If you utter one cry before a quarter of an hour has elapsed," said the ruffian who wore the cross of Saint Louis, "you are lost; there is a person in your household who is engaged with us in this affair, and he will secure his safety and ours at any price, even that of your life."

So saying, the wretch departed with his associates, leaving me half dead and without courage to call for assistance until the period marked out; with what anxiety did I watch the progress of the hand upon the face of the dial; just at the expiration of the fifteen minutes, Henriette, who was going to Paris, came to receive my orders; at the sight of me, pale as death and bound tightly to the chair, she screamed violently, and running to the bell began ringing furiously without once thinking of delivering me from my bonds. In a moment the room was crowded with servants, to whom I related what had befallen me; all Luciennes was in an uproar; my household, the inhabitants of the place, the police, all commenced a separate research throughout the roads and environs, but in vain, and the only traces of the robbers were three coats, one of which had the cross of Saint Louis affixed to it, found concealed in a wood near Luciennes. I recognised the vestments, but the miscreants who had worn them still eluded our search. I am not brave by nature,

and the shock I experienced from so frightful an occurrence brought on a violent fever, which confined me to my bed. My terrors increased with my malady, and for a long while, I used to have my people in attendance while I slept. I even insisted upon sending away such of my domestics as had recently entered my service, so strongly had the words of the robbers sunk into my imagination, although every person strove to persuade me that such an assertion as the thieves had made use of was a mere *ruse de guerre.* The news of this daring robbery was quickly carried to Versailles and Paris, and brought crowds of visitors to inquire after my health and safety. The duc de Cossé was among the first to arrive. He quite chided me for not having summoned him to my aid, as though he could have heard had I called him.

CHAPTER VII.

Reason of the queen's want of popularity—Visit of the maréchale de Mirepoix—Death of the prince de Conti—His mistress and their rings—Infidelity of the duc de Cossé.

SPITE of the exertions made by the police, the authors of the late outrage remained undiscovered, and I had no other consolation than such as arose from the praises and congratulations I received from my friends for the presence of mind which enabled me to conceal from the robbers the hiding-place of my diamonds. You have seen these splendid jewels, my dear friend, and can judge how severe would have been my loss had they too fallen into the hands of my despoilers.

For two or three weeks I received continual visits from my friends; who, amongst other news, brought me the account of a most infamous song which was

then in circulation against the queen. I heard it with disgust, and refused to accept a copy. Is it not singular that this excellent princess should have been more unfortunate than the two queens who preceded her on the throne? Neither the consort of Louis XIV. nor XV. had any enemies; how was it then that Marie Antoinette should have such numbers; and does the task of pitying and defending her devolve on me?

Many reasons led to her want of popularity. On the one hand, her ascendency over the king's mind was greatly dreaded; on the other, she was continually blamed by one ambitious person or other for not having employed it for some particular end favourable to their own wishes. The Choiseul party had flattered themselves with being reinstated in the ministry immediately upon the late king's death, and the unexpected appointment of the comte de Maurepas to the post of prime minister was a blow they could not pardon. In their angry rage, they pronounced the queen false to her promises; and as this cabal was composed of at least two-thirds of the court, and all the philosophers, it vented its disappointment in calumniating slanders, which were quickly circulated not only throughout Paris but all over the kingdom.

The beauty of the queen, her gaiety, her aversion to etiquette, and partiality for her own favourites, were likewise greatly to her disadvantage, The men whose homage she refused could not pardon her coldness, and the females whom she refused to admit into her society did her all the harm in their power.

Marie Antoinette has been charged with a too great fondness for her own family, with carrying on an intrigue with one of her brothers-in-law, for a pretended contempt of her husband, and her own lavish and imprudent expenses.

The marquis de V., a man universally acknowledged to be as unprincipled as disloyal, was the author of this abominable song. Had any other man been bold enough to have hazarded even a jest against madame

de Pompadour, during the lifetime of the late king, he would have been sentenced to the Bastille as his slightest punishment; but a queen of France, so much more deserving of protection, so far more respectable and exalted in rank, was yet permitted to receive an insult of such magnitude as the present without any steps being taken to punish the authors of it.

It was not long ere madame de Mirepoix came hurrying to Luciennes with the account of the song.

"My dear creature," exclaimed she, "how much have I suffered on your account. But why keep such a quantity of diamonds? Take my advice, and convert them into money; for really I see no use you can possibly have henceforward for such splendid ornaments."

"My loss is of little moment," replied I, smiling, "nay, it is even worth while meeting with such occurrences, that it may afford the after gratification of drawing forth the kind sympathies of our friends. But I must own I love my diamonds, I fancy they become me so well; I like to try them on, and when my mirror reflects my figure, adorned and sparkling with their brilliancy, I fancy myself once again the queen of Versailles, seated in all the pomp of royalty, with the king on one side of me and you on the other."

"A very pretty allusion truly! and one for which the next party of robbers who may pay you a visit will feel greatly obliged. But what think you of the famous, or rather, as some style it, the *infamous* song every one is now speaking of? Have you seen it?"

"Yes; with disgust."

"Why 'tis somewhat *leste*, rather broad, I must confess; but still an air of frankness runs through it which one cannot but admire. For my own part I detest every thing scurrilous—as I proved the other night by singing it at a party given by the marquise du Deffaut."

"And is it by singing the abominable lines that you prove your abhorrence of them?"

"Certainly, my dear; by circulating the libel it gives people an opportunity of discarding it in a moment as unworthy of belief: no one can judge fairly of a thing they have never seen. But you must admit that the queen is not entirely blameless; she does no good for any one person."

"She gives away large sums."

"But to whom does she give them? why to her own particular friends and party; while such as I get nothing, not a farthing. You may ask and solicit for ever, and all you obtain is some fine promise never intended to be kept. Oh! I protest she is not fit to succeed you at Versailles."

"The comparison alone does me infinite honour," replied I; "but to what am I to ascribe such a piece of flattery?"

"My lovely countess, it is no flattery at all: but plain simple truth, such as you know I always speak. The queen holds the sceptre, but why has she not your hand to guide it with? why has she not the same generous discrimination with which this fair hand—"

"Used to sign the orders upon the court banker for the maréchale de Mirepoix."

"Nay, now; you must not accuse me of interested motives either, or I shall be angry with you," said madame de Mirepoix; "but really I have talked away all my time, and I have a thousand places to call at. So adieu, *ma toute belle*; we shall soon meet again." Saying which, the maréchale bustled away.

This year was rendered memorable by the death of the prince de Conti. The late king could not endure him, because he alone of all his court refused an implicit obedience to his authority. This prince was a mixture of many virtues and vices. At the court of Louis XV. he was a perfect Roman, while in his private life he was addicted to every species of pleasure and excess. Obstinate, presumptuous, and daring, he yet possessed a great taste for the fine arts, and was a complete amateur of music. A philosopher and atheist, he

disbelieved the existence of a divine being, and yet entertained a most religious horror of ghosts. He exacted from every female he honoured with his love that she should present him with one of her rings, which he strung upon a roll of parchment on which was inscribed the name and presumed age of the lady, her height, colour of her hair and eyes, with the day and hour in which he had obtained this token of her favour. The number of these rings amounted at his death to several thousands. His greatest delight was in the society of the fair sex; it little mattered to him whether the object which enslaved him ranked as a duchess or a humble grisette. Quality was by no means essential, he only aimed at quantity; and I believe there was not a singer or dancer at the Opera who did not receive a pension from him. These fancies cost him enormous sums, which he paid without a murmur. He possessed some splendid cameos, so numerous as to require one person to take charge of them, and the number of his snuff-boxes was nearly equal to that of his rings.

One morning early I was surprised by a visit from the baron de Sugere, whom I had believed safe at his estate at Orleans. Wishing the disagreeable man anywhere, I was yet compelled to welcome him to Luciennes, and to inquire to what cause I might attribute the honour of his visit.

"Madam," replied he, "thank God, I have no personal motives but those of friendship. I am rich, and want neither place nor pension. I enjoy myself my own way, and seek the society of my friends that I may rejoice with them at their misfortunes, or condole with them at their good fortune; that is, I mean—bless me, madam, I hardly know how to explain myself."

"Never mind, monsieur le baron," answered I, smiling, "the truth will escape sometimes in spite of you."

"Well, well! I see you are like the rest of the world, madam; you think me ill-natured and severe, when, on the contrary, I am of the kindest and most indulgent nature."

I was nearly convulsed with laughter at this mistaken statement, and the restraint which politeness imposed upon me cost me no small effort.

"Yes," pursued the baron, "I love my friends with all their defects; but I cannot help seeing their faults; and while I lament their existence, I feel it a duty to point them out; but where is the harm? As for my enemies, (for like all mankind I have my share,) I treat them only with contemptuous silence."

"Ah! my dear baron," cried I, "then you surely hate no one; for you treat all the world as friends."

"Do you think so? But I would ask you a little question—do you see much of the duc de Cossé just now?"

"May I ask the reason of that question ere I answer it?"

"Simply because I believe the greater part of his time is taken up with a pretty creature called Céline?"

"And who is Céline?" said I, losing my gaiety as I asked the question.

"Dear me! do not you know her? She is the daughter of the woman who lets out the chairs at St. Sulpice. She so captivated the abbé de Boisgelin, upon the only occasion of his performing mass, that he took her at once under his holy care and protection. The marquis de M. carried her off from the poor abbé, who complained bitterly of this injustice; a cry in which all the clergy joined the more unanimously as they agreed that Céline, being the daughter of ecclesiastics, (her father was a beadle,) she belonged of right to the church, whose property she was."

"Well, but what is all this to me?"

"Nothing certainly; but condescend to listen a few minutes. The abbé Terray was determined to avenge his own fraternity, and offered such dazzling terms that the marquis was cut out in his turn. But he, in his turn, had to give place to the tempting offers of the farmer-general Soulot; who was forsaken, after a time, for a lieutenant in a regiment of infantry, who stripped

her of all the wealth her former lovers had bestowed upon her, and treated her most cruelly. Disgusted with love, and grown wise by experience, she determined upon a reformation: that is to say, loves no one, and deceives those who love her; and these principles are now so firmly fixed in her, that she will go any length in the execution of their suggestions."

"And the duc de Cossé visits her?"

"He is her constant shadow—never leaves her but when quite compelled. I really pity you; his acquaintance must have been so very agreeable for you—"

"And who presumes to say I do not still continue to enjoy it?" inquired I, with a haughty tone. "The duke is my friend, whom I am in the habit of seeing continually. But you, my good sir, have taken for granted what was merely intended as a joke upon your credulity."

The baron was about to reply, when company was announced; and the entrance of several visitors, among whom was the duc de Cossé, put an end to all further conversation on the subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jealousy—Comte Jean—A project of vengeance—The metamorphose—A surprise—A box on the ear—Finale.

Let whoever pleases endeavour to solve the riddle of the human heart, it is a task far above my philosophy. Yet let me honestly confess that the information I had just received through the baron de Sugere of the infidelity of M. de Cossé, stung me to the quick, although I well knew my own conduct had not been such as to

warrant my exacting inviolable constancy from him. Still, a feeling of rage and mortification filled my soul, as though in bestowing his tenderness upon others, he was defrauding me of what was exclusively my right. In the midst of these reflections the object of them made his appearance, but attended by so many visitors as to preclude all possibility of my coming to a positive explanation with him, according to my earnest desire. In vain did I seek to free myself from the crowd of tedious and uninteresting persons, in order to remove to the part of the room where M. de Cossé was seated; not once could I succeed in catching his eye, till just as I had resolved upon crossing the salon, in order to request his attendance in my boudoir, I saw him rising as though to take his leave; my first impulse was to command him to stay, but as I could not have commanded myself sufficiently to do it with a steady voice, I feared the possibility of bringing down upon me the attention of the company, and perhaps paving the way for some ridiculous scene, and therefore contented myself with coolly returning his parting bow.

I gave, on this trying day, a large dinner to a crowd of foreigners, courtiers, and men of letters, and I was peremptorily called upon to forget my own feelings in order to do the honours of the table. How much did it cost me to perform this painful obligation! Of all the trials to which my varied life has subjected me, none, in my opinion, exceeds that of being compelled to smile and seem at ease, when the heart is throbbing with the sickliest torments. Spite of all my attempts to play my part well it would not do; and after many ineffectual attempts at forcing my spirits, I was compelled to avail myself of the hacknied excuse of severe headache as a pretext for indulging in my own sorrowful reflections; one thing I resolved upon, that, until fresh particulars should transpire, I would not apprize the duke of what I already knew; and suddenly an idea arose in my mind, which, as it presented the

means of satisfying my doubts and avenging myself, should they be effectually confirmed, helped to dissipate my sorrow, and almost consoled me for the pain I was suffering.

Just as dinner was nearly over Geneviève entered the room, and informed me that a person who had just arrived from Paris begged to speak with me that very instant, and was awaiting me in the adjoining boudoir.

"Who is it?" cried I, shuddering at the recollection of my mysterious visitants from the princess Sapicha; "perhaps some fresh deputation of thieves." Poor Geneviève was ready to smile at my terror, yet repressing her mirth out of respect to the company, she replied,

"Nay, madam, be under no alarm; depend upon it no strangers are ever admitted now without fully satisfying your servants as to the honesty of their intentions."

I rose from the table, and, begging madame de Monaco to take my place, repaired to the chamber where my visitor awaited me. At the first glance a cry of emotion escaped me, for it was no other than comte Jean du Barri who stood before me; he whom I would have wished in Siberia rather than Paris, met my gaze, as I looked towards the table at which he was sitting. My brother-in-law approached, and, saluting me with his accustomed gallantry, exclaimed,

"How is this my fair sister? terrified at the sight of me? Am I to construe your agitation as a token of joy or sorrow at my return?"

"I did not expect you—your coming is so unlooked for," faltered I.

"Yes, yes; I perceive," answered comte Jean, "my exile has not been as heavily felt by you as by me; I have just returned from making the grand tour, have been all over Europe, where many a time I have said with the poet,

'On ne vit qu'à Paris et l'on végète ailleurs.'

I should have been suffocated for want of pure air in

those immense regions, which disagreed with me immensely; besides, I found such monotony, such a dull round, such a tiresome sameness in the amusements of all the capitals I visited. No, *viva* Paris, say I, dear delightful Paris, where one can always find persons of sense to amuse you, fools and simpletons to convert to one's profit and advantage, and pretty women to reward you for your toils when they are over."

"Still the same, comte Jean; you will never change, I think."

"Any more than yourself, my good sister-in-law. Do you know you look more beautiful than ever? Why, upon my soul, to bury you here in all the splendour of your beauty is nothing short of positive murder. I'll tell you what, my pretty countess, there is a mine of gold in those bright eyes, and if you will only aid my plans I will prove my words."

"You are pleased to flatter me," replied I; "but indeed, I am satisfied to be as I am, and seek no further change."

"Come, come, sister, this is downright folly; or has the death of old Frerot made you renounce the world and determine upon a reformation? You should look upon his loss with greater philosophy; imitate France, and join in the cry of *vive le roi*. France has accepted a new master, why cannot you do the same, and give a worthy successor to his august majesty."

"It will not be his grandson I shall select, at any rate," said I, laughing.

"And why not?" answered comte Jean; that is, if the thing were practicable. Absalom was, no doubt, a person of taste, and he married his father's wives even during the lifetime of king David; but there are other persons in the world besides Louis XVI., and if you are docile and willing to be conducted in the right road, I have already several irons in the fire."

"Listen to me, comte Jean," cried I, "you have

already bartered me times enough. I have been used by you as an article of traffic, and either lent, sold, or exchanged, as best suited your interests or your humour; but I have regained my liberty, and am resolved to keep it."

"Oh, I see! the sweet melancholy of widowhood charms you, and its elegant sensibilities are very seducing with young ladies; but, my pretty sister, let me warn you, that widowhood, like marriage, has its honeymoon, and that this moon once passed, ennui returns, and that is an enemy we must try to dislodge."

"Pray," said I, "is your brother comte Guillaume dead?"

"Dead!" replied comte Jean, "who the devil spoke of him? No. 'Tis of your royal widowhood I spoke. Come, come; have you no ambition?"

"I never possessed any; always satisfied with the present, I have ever lived on careless and reckless of the morrow."

"And for your reward you are poor and friendless; this is really a pity; and out of pure regard for you, I offer to set about building up your good-fortune over again; can you hesitate?"

"I detest your sex."

"Ha! ha! ha! My dear sister, as sure as fate you have been crossed or betrayed in some love affair since I saw you. Why what in the name of all the stars have you to do with a tender and susceptible heart. Oh beware of such an evil; nothing tends sooner to dim the eye and pale the cheek; depend upon it, your feeling sensitive souls grow old and wrinkled long before others who are content to take things more quietly."

"I am, indeed, very wretched."

"Softly, softly, my dear sister; for heaven's sake do not seek to move me to pity."

"I wish but to relate to you my present cause of chagrin," said I, bursting into tears, "the duc de Cossé has betrayed my confidence, he loves another!"

"The monster!"

"He is indeed unfaithful, and she whom he prefers to me is Céline."

"Céline!" cried comte Jean, interrupting me; "stay, I should know the person you mean, she was called Javotte when the abbé de Boisgelin took her to himself; mademoiselle Albert, during the period of her acquaintance with the marquis de Vaudreuil; madame Laurent when the abbé Terray honoured her with his addresses; and during the reign of the farmer-general Soulot styled herself the baronne de Meifleur; and when she forsook her plebeian lover for young d'Amblemiens, she assumed the appellation of mademoiselle Céline."

"You seem, indeed, wonderfully well acquainted with her history," said I.

"And so de Cossé has forsaken you for this very Céline?"

"His treachery has almost distracted me," answered I, "and I must be avenged."

"Indeed," returned comte Jean; "I see no harm in your amusing yourself according to your fancy, but I do not yet perceive in what way you propose doing so."

"My design," said I, "is to send to this fresh object of de Cossé's love some person who shall feign a passion, which, by provoking a reciprocal feeling on the part of the fair one, shall supersede the ingrate, who thus rejects me, and plant in his heart the torturing pang of jealousy I now feel."

"And what if this mighty romantic scheme should not succeed? Really, sister-in-law, you seem still to consider yourself as queen of France when all things bent to your will; but, for the present, leave the affair in my hands, and ere a fortnight shall have elapsed, you shall have all the satisfaction you desire; but first, let me have 200,000 francs."

"That I would do," answered I, "if you were not

so well acquainted with the road to all the gaming houses of Paris."

"An idea strikes me," cried comte Jean, "but before I explain myself I must see mademoiselle Céline; that I will do to-morrow morning; and at dinner time you may expect me to give an account of my proceedings. Adieu, you are expected back to your friends, and I must return to Paris. I shall reserve the account of my adventures till our next meeting; *à propos*, have you 100 louis in your purse? I left mine in my dressing-room, and I have my vehicle to pay for."

"Here are twenty-four sous for the course," said I, smiling.

"And for other matters how much?" inquired comte Jean, with an imperturbable gravity.

I opened my secretaire and gave him the sum he required, which he received with joy; and hastily bidding me farewell, quitted the room, leaving me scarcely knowing whether to feel pleasure or pain from his visit. Upon the whole, my mind felt somewhat relieved by our late conversation, and I rejoined the company, radiant in smiles and renewed hope.

I was bantered considerably upon my long absence, and, by way of explanation, I informed my guests who my late visitor had been, when a universal cry of congratulation arose upon the return of comte Jean.

By way of accounting for the reappearance of that personage in France, I will just state, that having written to the comte de Maurepas, inquiring whether he were really exiled or not from his native country, that minister replied, that his researches for any document proving such to be the case having proved fruitless, there could be no objection to comte du Barri reappearing in France whenever he should be so inclined. Comte Jean lost no time in returning to Paris, proposing to divide his time alternately between that capital and Toulouse, a plan he still pursues.

"Well, sister," said comte Jean, when I next saw him, "I have just quitted Céline."

"And is she so very pretty?"

"Beautiful! charming!"

"I must doubt both your taste and common sense," retorted I, angrily; "but pray proceed, what did she say?"

"Why, she spoke much of you; and I easily found out that she was in the constant habit of seeing the duc de Cossé. She seems very desirous of meeting you, who, by the way, she has never yet seen."

"An insolent creature! perhaps she expects that I shall invite her to dine with me some day."

"I do not know; but at any rate I hope you will sup with her."

"Sup with her! yes, if I may strangle her at the same time."

"Deuce take it, sister, how you talk; really jealousy and rage deprive you of your senses. We are permitted to sup with all, but the usages of society do not allow of our strangling any. Not but what I fully agree with you in considering it by no means honourable or creditable for you to take your seat at the table of so questionable a person as Céline."

"Then why advise such a step."

"Because the thing may be managed without in any way compromising you, without its ever being known that you have ever so far honoured your rival. My plan is this: I have told Céline that upon my return to Paris, I was accompanied by a young relation, who had a most ardent curiosity to behold all the beauties of the day, and that I wished she would assist his desire.

"'What sort of person is he?'" demanded she, with a sort of interest.

"'Very handsome, very rich, and wholly untaught in the ways of the world.'"

"And where is this nonpareil to be found?" said I.

"He is already found, my dear sister; for in sober

earnestness, I mean you to play the part of my country-cousin."

"Me! what an idea!"

"Not so absurd as it may at first seem," replied he; "you will be effectually disguised in male attire, and after having played your part as lover for a sufficient time, it will be easy to time your visit so as to be surprised by the duke."

There was something so romantically extravagant in all this, that it caught my fancy immediately. The thoughts of deceiving Céline, while I enjoyed the triumph of betraying her infidelity to the duke, seemed to me the very refinement of malice, and the most piquant kind of revenge I could possibly take. I therefore closed with comte Jean's suggestions, and, by the aid of a skilful tailor, I was speedily supplied with a change of fashionable costume, hats, swords, buckles, &c., &c., with everything requisite for my new character. A perfect silence was observed on the subject, except towards Geneviève and Henriette: these preparations being completed, comte Jean wrote the following note to Céline:—

"My lovely friend,—My nephew, the vicomte de Bauselle, is attacked with such a degree of timidity, that he dares not venture to present himself before you unless previously introduced to the mentor I begged of you to engage for him; should you have found a person suited for the office, I shall be happy if you will bring him to my hotel to breakfast to-morrow morning. The viscount, besides being noble as a king, and handsome as Apollo, possesses a fortune, which in our part of France is valued at 200,000 livres yearly; he is generous and unsuspecting, and precisely the sort of character so easily duped; but, for heaven's sake, breathe not a word of this. I should be sorry to have my poor friend robbed or murdered. Adieu; we breakfast at ten o'clock precisely. Ever, with best wishes, your faithful admirer and servant," &c., &c.

Our plan was now fixed; a note wretchedly scrawled had been received from Céline, saying, "that she had found what we required, and should be punctual to the hour mentioned." Accordingly, I arrayed myself in my male costume, of which the following description may serve to convey an idea.

I wore a kind of loose trowsers, embroidered silk stockings, shoes with red heels, a waistcoat of silver cloth, and a coat of chamois coloured satin lined with blue, and lightly worked in silver; a cravat fastened by a diamond brooch completed my dress, to which may be added, a hat ornamented with white feathers, and a golden hilted sword. My hair was half curled and tied in an enormous bag. I really looked irresistible, at least so said my glass, and my two faithful friends Geneviève and Henriette.

However well I might have been satisfied with my appearance, my heart beat violently as I thought of the possibility of my being recognised by my rival. Comte Jean sought to reassure me, and I was busily engaged listening to a comparison between myself and Gil Blas, whom comte Jean protested I put him strongly in mind of, when the folding-doors of our apartment were thrown open, and Céline appeared; her first glance was towards me, and as I returned her scrutinizing look, I felt myself grow pale with spite, for Céline was far more charming than I had been willing to suppose. Addressing herself to comte Jean, she began by excusing the absence of the friend of whom she had spoken, some unforeseen hinderance had prevented his presenting himself; "but I," said she, "have flown hither to assure you of my hearty desire to serve you or any part of your family."

My brother-in-law was too well versed in the ways of the world to be at all deceived by these words; he clearly perceived that his plan had succeeded, and that the report of my large fortune had rendered my rival unwilling that any person should share with her the task of modernizing the country youth. My

brother-in-law took my hand; "Nephew," said he, "let me introduce you to a particular and excellent friend of mine."

I advanced with awkward indifference, saluted her, without once raising my eyes, and uttered some unintelligible compliment, which was set down to the score of provincial *gaucherie.* However, my embarrassment did not tell to my disadvantage, and I easily perceived by the many encouraging glances bestowed on me, that I might venture to press my suit without much fear of being denied; accordingly, ere we parted, I had received permission from Céline to call upon her the following day.

At the appointed hour I presented myself at the house of Céline; and advancing with perfect ease and self-confidence, laid at her feet a bouquet of roses, fastened round by a diamond ring. This mark of gallantry and good taste was most graciously received, and the fair object of my attentions took an opportunity of inquiring whether my uncle had any control over my fortune. To this I replied firmly in the negative; and Céline, satisfied that she should be enabled to plunder me quite at her ease, began to throw off much of her reserve, and openly to express the growing passion with which I inspired her.

A second meeting was made for the following day, when I returned, bearing a present of several magnificent Indian stuffs; among which was some muslin, so fine, that although sufficient in quantity for four dresses, it weighed scarcely fifteen ounces.

Céline was really a seducing object; witty, coquettish, and sprightly, a countenance beaming with the sweetest smiles, dark, curling hair, large, hazel eyes, a hand and foot moulded in the most perfect symmetry, were among the many charms with which nature had endowed her. Perhaps, indeed, her slender figure was not sufficiently embonpoint, but she was still too captivating for my wishes.

During this time, I had much difficulty in preventing

my anger from breaking out whenever I met the duc de Cossé. I saw him, indeed, almost daily, as usual, and never without hearing him reiterate his assurances of never-failing attachment, which I feigned to believe, although nearly bursting with my desire of reproaching him with his perfidy.

At length, this intrigue seemed rapidly approaching its dénouement; and one day that Céline had received me with open arms, and while still enduring the warmth of her embrace, a man suddenly entered the apartment; it was the duc de Cossé.

Céline, at his sight, uttered a cry of terror, and, pushing me away, hid her face with her hands, while I remained mute with sudden surprise and embarrassment, arising from the strict and fixed scrutiny with which the duke continued to gaze upon me. Worlds would I have given to have been beyond the reach of his penetrating looks. But, all at once, recovering his usual expression of countenance, he demanded of me, with an insulting smile, what was my business with mademoiselle Céline?

"Simply to pay my compliments, and seek to render myself agreeable in her eyes; and I flatter myself I have not been altogether unsuccessful."

These words, which it cost me no small difficulty to pronounce in an intelligible tone, terrified Céline into a sense of her own danger, and interrupting any further boasting on my part, she exclaimed,

"Poor silly child! your ignorance of the forms of society can alone excuse your presumption in mistaking simple politeness for——"

"My good Céline," exclaimed the duke, "that this poor trembling swain of yours should not have sufficient discretion to refrain from boasting of a lady's favour, does not astonish me in the least, but that you should attempt to pass off the tender endearments I just now witnessed for the mere form of politeness, is much more astonishing. Meanwhile, my dapper little gentleman," cried he, turning to me, "let me

beg the honour of knowing by what name you are generally known?"

"Vicomte Henri de Beauselle," replied I.

"'Tis a name wholly unknown at Versailles," answered M. de Cossé, "nevertheless, I presume you are a man of honour, and will not object to giving me such proofs as I shall expect from you."

"I do not comprehend you, sir," said I, hardly knowing what I said.

"How! not comprehend me? impossible. Well then, young sir, to make my meaning more clear, this lady (*pointing to Céline*) received my attentions ere she smiled on yours; (here a sickness came over me, and I felt as though sinking to the earth;) she has ever assured me of her exclusive preference, you are, consequently, an intruder, and I must request you will immediately quit this place."

"Who, I quit the place?"

"Yes, you—you, yourself, sir."

"And you challenge me to fight?"

"Unless, indeed, you manage these affairs by proxy, and can acquaint me with the name of any good-natured uncle or father who will take your place on the occasion—speak, boy."

"Sir, I never fight; I dislike it, and always refuse upon principle."

"Oh, the good for nothing little wretch," vociferated Céline; "why, I protest he is a coward."

"Hold your tongue you insolent creature!" cried I, with vehemence, giving her, at the same time, a hearty box on the ear. Enraged and confounded, Céline turned to implore the vengeance of the duke, who was laughing immoderately at the ludicrous scene.

"Fie, sir," cried he, at length; "you insult one who cannot defend herself; and now I have her cause as well as mine to avenge."

"Be it so," replied I, weeping; "take the part of this creature; it needed only such conduct to put the finish to the many wrongs I have received from you."

Céline, stupified at the sight of my tears, gazed in silence; while the duke, wholly unmoved, exclaimed,

"Come, come, my lord; the sooner we terminate our business together the better." And without further ceremony, he took me by the arm, and led, or rather carried me to his equipage, which waited at the door, into which he compelled me to ascend, without my having the power to offer the smallest resistance.

CHAPTER IX.

Explanation with the duc de Cossé—The emperor Joseph II. at Paris—He visits Luciennes—Madame de Mirepoix—Comte Jean.

Much more uneasy at the anticipation of what M. de Cossé must think of my strange conduct than by any apprehensions of being despised by Céline for my pusillanimity, I scarcely ventured to raise my eyes from the ground; when, suddenly, my meditations were broken into by the duke's bursting into a violent fit of laughter. Surprised, I was about to ask the cause of all this mirth, when my companion, catching me in his arms, embraced me with a vehemence which entirely deprived me of utterance.

"You have, indeed, avenged yourself, my lovely friend," cried the duke, "and, I trust, will no longer refuse me your pardon for all the pain I have caused you."

"You know me then, perfidious man!" exclaimed I, half crying, half laughing.

"How could I fail of recognising those heavenly features under whatsoever disguise I might behold them? Believe me, they are too deeply engraved on my

heart to be for one moment mistaken. I knew you the instant I entered the room, and took my measures accordingly."

"Would I had been aware of your extreme penetration," cried I, with all the volatility of my natural disposition; "I might then have impressed my hated rival with a high opinion of my courage at a cheap rate. But how can you, my lord, justify yourself for so gross, so flagrant a violation of your vows of perpetual constancy?"

"By confessing my fault, and throwing myself on your mercy; an error is not a crime. Be then yourself; pardon this one lapse, and bind me, thereby, more firmly than ever to you."

"Could you doubt the sincerity of my affection?" interrupted I, with more of tenderness than anger.

"Believe me, no," returned the duke; "I scorn to shelter myself under so unworthy an idea. Never could I doubt you, even were you to retaliate upon me by giving me a rival in your turn."

"That will never happen," cried I; "but tell me in what direction are we driving?"

"To Luciennes."

"For heaven's sake," exclaimed I, "do not let me be seen there so strangely attired; bid your coachman proceed with all speed to the residence of comte Jean, where I will strip off this odious dress never again to resume it."

We had by this time reached the Champs Elysées, but, at the duke's command, the carriage turned in the direction of comte Jean's hotel. Luckily, my brother-in-law was from home; I therefore bade the duke adieu, promising to see him in the evening, and hastened to resume my feminine attire; after which, I returned to Luciennes, whither M. de Cossé quickly followed me, and, with many assurances of contrition for the past, and promises never again to see Céline, obtained my pardon for his offence.

You are aware how greatly events are magnified in

the relation, and will not, therefore, be surprised to hear that a thousand absurd rumours were quickly afloat; the duke was said by some to have been dangerously wounded in a duel, in which he had killed his antagonist, a nephew of comte Jean du Barri. In vain did M. de Cossé personally assure his friends and all Paris of his perfect safety; he was pronounced dangerously if not mortally hurt, and his own assurances went for nothing in the affair. Vainly did comte Jean protest he had no nephew; the story was too good to be lost for want of a hero, and, accordingly, the wise folks of Paris declared their perfect certainty of his having such a relative, whose last moments they even went on to describe. Céline, from vanity, encouraged all these inventions, for she had no wish to draw down personal ridicule by revealing the cowardice of the pretended vicomte de Beauselle, whom, on the contrary, she magnified into a perfect hero, and declared her intention of wearing black in compliment to his memory.

The good understanding which subsisted between my brother-in-law and the supposed murderer of his nephew greatly amazed the gossips of the day, and he was frequently reproached with it in a tone of warmth that provoked his excessive risibility. For my own part, the increased tenderness I received from M. de Cossé soon made me forget his past unkindness, and I was entirely convinced he no longer visited Céline, for even the ill-natured baron de Sugere never mentioned his name.

It was at this period that the emperor Joseph, second son of the empress Marie Thérese, and brother to our queen, paid a visit to the French capital. This great prince was making the tour of Europe, examining every object with the attention of one really anxious to profit by all he saw and heard. Affable, polished, and witty, he was, indeed, the very model of an accomplished prince, worthy of a throne. Simple and unostentatious, he would accept of no display of royalty or

grandeur upon his arrival, and while he warmly entered into all the fêtes given in honour of his sister, he received with the utmost indifference all marks of personal attention, and went languidly through the ceremony of exhibiting himself at such entertainments as were expressly dedicated to himself.

You may easily conceive how popular one so amiable would become with the Parisians; but without dwelling further on his praise, I will just relate the particulars of a visit he did me the honour to pay me. He had a great desire to see me, and employed the mediation of the duc de Cossé to effect his object. I was but too much flattered with the request, and begged M. de Cossé would assure the emperor of the extreme gratification I should feel in having an opportunity of offering my personal respects to so near a relative of our queen.

In truth, I was not a little delighted to have the means of proving how entirely calumny had falsified me, when it asserted that I was held in contempt and abhorrence by every member of the family of Marie Thérese. I saw at once all the triumph it would afford me over those who would willingly decry me as beneath the notice of any of superior rank. Such a visit could not fail of giving me fresh claims to consideration, by abundantly evincing, that although no longer possessed of the friendship of a king, I was yet honoured by the relatives of his successor.

On the 15th of May, the emperor, under his travelling name of the comte de Fulseinstein, arrived, accompanied only by the duc de Cossé, Brissac, and the comte de Merey Argenteau, his ambassador in France; he was plainly dressed, without any other ornament than the order of the golden fleece fastened round his neck by a red ribbon, and partly concealed by his waistcoat. He was of middling height, and pleasing countenance, with an air of gracious condescension that went at once to the heart. The duke presented him to me by his assumed name, and in

return for my welcoming courtesy, he kissed my hand with the most respectful gallantry. I was about to kneel before him, when he prevented me, saying,

"You will, I trust, madam, pardon my anxiety to behold her who has justly been deemed one of the wonders of France; suffer me to add that this interview more than equals my greatest expectations."

"I am but too proud, my lord, to find our mutual impressions so similar," answered I.

"Ah, madam, I perceive you have everything in your favour, wit and beauty combined."

"Nay, my lord," replied I, "you, at least, have no need to envy others."

Joseph II., with a well-bred ease, then turned the conversation upon Versailles, spoke with esteem of the king, and mentioned the queen in the most affectionate terms. Profiting by this opening, I took an opportunity of expressing my gratitude towards that princess, and this I did with so much genuine warmth, that the emperor, looking at me with a slight appearance of surprise, said,

"Do you then really regard Marie Antoinette?"

"Why should I not love and esteem her?" returned I. "Oh, sir, well I know, that, intoxicated with my former elevation, and misled by those around me, I have presumed to forget my respect towards this excellent princess; which she, far from punishing in my present humiliated condition, has magnanimously forgiven. Believe me, my lord, my heart is better than my head, and a kindness sinks so deeply in my recollection, that nothing can ever after efface it."

"You are a charming creature," exclaimed the emperor, much moved, "and have been most unjustly calumniated. It falls to the pleasing task of those who know you, to repair the wrong that has been done you; and you may safely trust your cause in my hands."

I invited the emperor to visit the gardens of Luciennes, which he accepted, and graciously offered me his arm, an honour respect would not allow me to accept.

" Nay, no refusal, I entreat," said my courteous guest, with the tone and manners of one of the court of Louis XIV., " beauty is ever a queen and sovereign."

This kind speech brought tears into my eyes, and ere I had half sufficiently admired the polished elegance and gentlemanly suavity of the comte de Fulseinstein, the hour of separation arrived, and my noble visitor departed, thanking me for the *favour* I had *conferred* on him, these were his own words. For several days after this memorable visit, my doors were besieged by a crowd of persons, all eager and anxious to hear me relate a tale, which, in truth, I was never weary of repeating.

The maréchale de Mirepoix was not the last to hasten to Luciennes.

" Well, my dear," cried she, embracing me, " so you have had an illustrious guest; and what favour did you solicit of him ?"

" Of whom do you speak ?" said I.

" Of the emperor, or the comte de Fulseinstein, whichever he likes best to be called. I say, my dear soul, what did you ask him for ?"

" For nothing," replied I.

" Impossible !" almost screamed madame de Mirepoix. " I can never believe, when you had so glorious an opportunity, you would have been foolish and imprudent enough to throw it away. Why you had him here all the morning."

" Yes," replied I; " but remember, I have no claims upon the house of Austria."

" Then what, for heaven's sake, did you find to talk about ? Oh, what a cruel waste of precious time ! Why now, if you had only managed to slip a sort of memorial into his pocket, it might have led to something——"

" We talked of the weather, and so on," answered I, with provoking ease.

" A very profitable subject to choose when an emperor favours you with his company. But at any

rate, I suppose you have received some pretty little remembrance in the form of a present?"

"As yet, the personage you allude to has not thought of such a thing, and I very sincerely trust he will not."

The maréchale quitted me quite angrily; indeed, her displeasure at my thoughtlessness, (as she styled it,) seemed to render her almost ready to beat me.

However, the present she hinted at from the comte de Fulseinstein reached me a few days after this conversation, and, like himself, it was kind and considerate. It consisted of a message from the queen herself, communicated through madame de Monaco, in which she thanked me for the manner in which I had spoken of her; and informed me, that whenever, for the future, I had any favour to ask, I might apply directly to her. I preferred this gracious intimation to the most splendid gift that could have been made me, and I prayed the princess to bear to her majesty the expression of my most respectful gratitude. I did not abuse this kindness on the part of Marie Antoinette, for a feeling of delicacy made me shrink from the idea of importuning one who so graciously inclined towards me.

"Well, sister," said comte Jean, as he unexpectedly entered my apartment; "am I to offer my congratulations? When shall I prepare to accompany you to Vienna?"

"What can induce you to ask me such a question," returned I, "when you know how greatly I dislike long journies? that to Agen was more than sufficient for me."

"But the emperor has paid you a visit."

"He has so."

"Well, then; what arrangements did you make with him?"

"I did not ask him whether his imperial crown were to be disposed of to the best bidder," cried I; "neither did he ask me to sell him Luciennes."

"A truce with all this folly," exclaimed comte Jean, impatiently; "the thing is of a serious nature, and deserves to be treated as such; so tell me at once, has he left all preliminaries to be settled by the comte de Mercey Argenteau, or any other nobleman? for I know very well, that if I do not manage these things for you, you would never see that proper stipulations were made."

"My good friend," said I, "give yourself no concern, I beseech you; your valuable services are not likely to be required on the present occasion, for with regard to the emperor, I must assure you that the gallant bearing of a gentleman was all he evinced towards me."

"Sister, sister," cried comte Jean, vehemently, "I see how it is, you have withdrawn your confidence from me to place it in some other person; this is ungrateful and ill-judged of you. I know better than any living soul what is most for your good, and you have fifty chances to one in my management."

"I am fully aware of all I owe you."

"Why yours was a merry reign if a short one; and had you but permitted me to have my own way, you would now have been queen dowager."

"Such an elevation, then, depended only on you?" said I, smiling.

"Nothing could have been more easy; surely you were, in every respect, superior to madame de Maintenon."

"I have tried to persuade myself of the truth of your remark many times," answered I; "but still I am compelled to admit, that, in some particular or other, I must have fallen short of her merits."

"Your great error was your so feebly supporting the jesuits; had you but recalled them, you might have effected anything; but let us not talk of the past when the future claims our care. France owes a debt to Austria for the queen it has given us, and why should not the emperor——"

"Comte Jean," exclaimed I, with earnestness, "I solemnly assure you the emperor thinks not of me either as wife or mistress."

"Then why did he come hither?"

"From curiosity," answered I.

"And what did he say or do?"

"Paid me a few compliments, and honoured me by walking over the grounds."

"Poor silly prince," ejaculated comte Jean. "Well, in my time, when foreign monarchs visited a lady from curiosity to behold her beauty, it was neither to waste the time in empty compliments, nor in walking about her park. Look at the late king, he was a great king; but princes are sadly degenerating. Do you expect this Platonic visitor will favour you with his presence again?"

"Indeed, I do not."

"Then you should return his visit."

"I cannot take so unwarrantable a liberty."

"Then write to him."

"But I have nothing to ask of him; what can I say?"

"Write, I tell you, and his reply will dictate our future plans."

"My good comte Jean, why will you so obstinately pursue a mere chimera? indeed you are quite in error."

But comte Jean was not to be persuaded, his wishes had misled him; and to all my remonstrances he kept continually repeating, "Never mind, for all what you say, my dear sister, were I in your place I would just try the effect of a little change of air in the Austrian capital."

I had much difficulty in persuading my brother-in-law to refrain from addressing the emperor on my account; he insisted upon it I was throwing away the only chance I might ever have, nor did I effectually persuade him to desist until comte de Fulseinstein had quitted Paris.

About this period a new planet arose at court and

attracted universal attention. The comtesse Jules de Polignac, a young and beautiful woman, of a poor, but noble family, and whose greatest merit consisted in an undeviating gentleness and pliancy of disposition, had become the friend of Marie Antoinette, who greatly needed some kind and sympathizing bosom into which she could pour the many causes of uneasiness with which her own breast was filled. As a male friend, the duc de Coigny stood highest in her favour, without any person being able to account for his having so enviable a preeminence. The queen's open and ingenuous nature made no attempt to conceal her regard for this nobleman; who, fearing lest such flattering notice might draw down upon him the displeasure of Louis XVI., sought to divert all possibility of such an event, by taking as his mistress an opera dancer, remarkable for her coquettish manners and bold effrontery. This female gave so much publicity to her *liaison*, that the very château of Versailles resounded with it.

The queen, displeased with so much éclat being given to the duke's *liaisons*, spoke to him somewhat angrily upon the subject. M. de Coigny, with great effrontery, confessed the truth of the charge, but sought to appease her majesty by insinuating, that the affair was merely intended as a blind to divert certain surmises entertained by the king. "Sir," replied Marie Antoinette, drawing up her fine form to its full height, "the wife of Cæsar might not even bear suspicion, and a queen of France needs no such means as those you have been pleased to adopt to justify her actions."

The poor duke, caught in the snare his vanity had laid for him, sought in vain some better excuse for his folly; but his day of favour was at an end, and with a cool inclination of the head, the queen dismissed him her presence.

Marie Antoinette earnestly desired to meet with a kind and congenial soul, in whom her confidence

might, with safety, be placed; and at this juncture, circumstances combined strongly to throw the comtesse Jules de Polignac in her way. The gentle, yet insinuating manners of this lady soon attracted the notice, and ultimately secured the regard of the queen. Madame de Polignac possessed that simple and ingenuous appearance, that utter disregard of self that wins our greatest favours by seeming to ask nothing. Supported by able counsellors, and aided by a naturally fine tact, she rose rapidly at court. Honours and fortune seemed to rain upon her and hers; all favour was completely monopolized; and even at the period at which I write, no diminution has been observed. At a supper given at my house, the conversation fell upon the character of madame de Polignac, who, as may reasonably be supposed, was an object of general envy and dislike to all the females of the court. Each began to criticise and blame according to their humour, while some of the gentlemen amused themselves with calculating the sums madame Jules cost the state annually, and certainly the amount was enormous.

It was next asserted that the royal pair had many misunderstandings and differences upon the subject of the comtesse de Polignac, as well as many other of the queen's predilections. The duc d'Aumont related to us, that, at the last fête of St. Louis, Marie Antoinette had purposed attending the concert at the Thuilleries in honour of the sacred day, then of visiting the Coliseum, and afterwards being present at the Comédie Italienne. The king, informed of all these plans, objected to them upon many trifling grounds, such as the weather, the fatigue, &c., till the queen felt herself called upon to abandon the scheme altogether; by way of recompense for the disappointment it occasioned, she determined to give a fête at the petit Trianon on the following day in honour of the king. Some kind, officious friend apprized his majesty that such an entertainment would cost at least 80,000 francs, upon which he expressed his positive disap-

probation of such an expense; and when the queen came to invite him with her accustomed grace and elegance, he flatly and peremptorily refused to be present.

These recitals surprised us, and all forbode a coming storm. The prospect of humbling the Polignacs and annoying the queen, was but too welcome to many, who hailed every contrary event and disappointment which befell these objects of their dislike with the most eager joy. I shall close this chapter by instancing one further circumstance, in which the enemies of Marie Antoinette rejoiced at finding her wishes crossed, and her own desires thwarted.

Prince Louis de Rohan, bishop of Strasbourg, had, as you may remember, made himself extremely obnoxious to the queen in consequence of a most disrespectful letter concerning herself and august mother, which had fallen into the hands of her majesty, whose great wish was to deprive him of the succession to the office of grand almoner, which had been promised to him upon the demise of its present possessor. It was generally supposed that the queen's wishes would decide the matter, but it happened otherwise; and she had to sustain the mortification of seeing the man triumph whom most she detested.

Accordingly, upon the first intimation of the decease of the cardinal de la Roche Aymon, the princesse de Marsan obtained an audience of the king; and, spite of the repugnance of his majesty backed by the earnest prayers of the queen, she drew from Louis XVI. a ratification of the promise which had so unwisely been given.

"Congratulate me," cried prince Louis, when he presented himself at a supper given the same evening at my hotel at Paris. "I am now grand almoner of France."

"Can it be possible," exclaimed I, "that her majesty has pardoned you?"

"Not exactly; but I owe my present success to the

weakness and timidity of the king, who could not make head against madame de Marsan, supported by the comte de Maurepas. A promise was formerly made in my favour, and my friends have merely asked for its fulfilment; and so well did the princesse de Marsan talk to him of honour, and the necessity of a sovereign's setting his subjects a fitting example of exactitude in the performance of their promises, that the poor king was compelled to say yes; when, very possibly, he had been strongly urged by my enemies to say no."

"And the queen?" asked I.

"Is of course more than ever inclined to dislike me; but what care I—victory is mine; and, as I before said, I am grand almoner of France."

CHAPTER X.

A recapitulation—*Le petit saint*—His passion for *lettres de cachets*—The statue of Diana at the bath—The marquis de Montesquieu Feyensac—A letter to the comte de Provence—Preparations for an interview.

In casting a retrospective glance over what I have written, I perceive that I have forgotten to place in chronological order several particulars deserving of notice; I will, therefore, now atone for my negligence. The first event of which I shall speak is the death of the duc de Saint Florentin, which took place about the period I am now describing. This minister, after a life of cringing servility, was dismissed from office, after having been the tool of the court, and the sycophantic slave of the king's mistresses. As the brother of the

comtesse de Maurepas, he had looked for an able and efficient supporter in his brother-in-law; but even the influence of this nobleman was insufficient to protect *le petit saint* from the general odium he had incurred. He was compelled to resign in favour of M. de Malesherbes.

I have related to you, in a former letter, the manner in which I received M. de Saint Florentin when he himself presumed to bring me the order for my banishment, and, certainly, the honest language I addressed to him might well have converted *le petit saint* into an irreconcilable enemy; but far from it, he caused a crowd of his friends (for even such a contemptible being as himself boasted of some bearing the title) to besiege me with assurances of his attachment, and ardent desire to testify the same in person. During the period of my exile I firmly refused to listen to such suggestions; my wounded pride revolted at the mention of his name, and my injuries were too recent to admit of a compromise; but upon my return to Luciennes his assiduities were renewed, and he even engaged madame de Mirepoix to intercede in his behalf. She called one morning before her usual hour for favouring her friends, and exclaimed, after the first few compliments had passed,

"Oh, my dear, I must not forget to tell you that M. de la Vrillière has charged me to present you with the expression of his most respectful regard."

"The hypocrite," cried I, disdainfully; "why still descend to such petty artifices? Has he forgotten that Louis XV. is dead, and that I am no longer mistress at Versailles?"

"He remembers these things well," replied the maréchale, "and his present professions are therefore well entitled to your belief. I will answer for the sincerity of his heart."

"Heart!" interrupted I; "Oh, my dear maréchale, do him not the honour to suppose he possesses one; be assured that, in the event of any examination

taking place after his death, you would find that organ missing, and its place supplied by a *lettre de cachet*; speak to me no more of him, I pray, he is a wretch too low for contempt."

"It may be so," answered madame de Mirepoix, calmly, "but you know mercy is promised to the greatest sinner, and here is one who, grovelling at your feet, implores your pardon; will you then refuse it?"

"Consider how he has treated me."

"Nay, but my dear countess, exert your usual good sense, and tell me how he could have acted otherwise. He supposed the new monarch was unfavourably disposed towards you, and naturally enough wished to make the best *début* he could at the beginning of a new reign."

"Had we been living in Turkey instead of France," said I, "I doubt not but he would have contended for the honour of bringing me the bowstring with his own hands."

"Very possibly," rejoined the maréchale, "he has always been devoted to the duties of his office."

"Thanks to a just Providence, he is dismissed from office, and 'tis to that circumstance I am indebted for so many friendly protestations."

"Why, certainly, he has now more leisure to express his devotion to his friends."

"And dares he to call me among the number?"

"He only asks permission to prove to you that he has never ceased to be so, unless, indeed, when the duties of his office imperatively forbade his appearing openly as such."

"I do not desire such conscientious friends," replied I, warmly; "tell *le petit saint* that I will never again see him in this world, and I trust to manage too well to run a chance of meeting him in the next."

"You are decidedly wrong," answered madame de Mirepoix; "the duke is old, rich, and without children; who knows now but his desire of being

friends with you may arise from an intention of giving you a place in his will."

We were still discussing the matter, when the duchesse d'Aiguillon arrived, and on being referred to, gave her opinion directly in favour of madame de Mirepoix.

"This reconciliation," observed she, "will tend greatly to your interest; depend upon it, madame de Maurepas will be much pleased with it, and an enemy lost is always better than an enemy gained. Besides, I could cite various other reasons, among which may be considered the triumph of seeing the duke brought to own his error by humbly crawling at your feet."

I was so much beset between my two advisers, that I at length yielded, but only on the express condition that madame de Langeac should not be included in our treaty of amity; this point being agreed to, the duc de Saint Florentin paid me an early visit, at which he appeared not a little embarrassed, until, by the natural manner in which I received him, I succeeded in restoring him to himself. I openly avowed my reasons for having withdrawn my friendship from him, and by entering at once on the subject, I set the poor duke far more at his ease than had I avoided any explanation. I could not help admiring the patience and gentleness with which he bore my anger, and having heard me to the end in silence, he kissed my hand, and said smilingly,

"Ah, madam, I see that with all your penetration, you have not yet formed a just idea of the duty of a minister towards his monarch; you suppose that his situation resembles yours, but nothing can be more widely different. A lovely woman who holds any influence over the mind of a king, may employ it in acts of kindness and conciliation; she is, indeed, a sort of interceding angel, for ever stepping between the offender and the royal vengeance; she has but one aim to pursue, that of becoming at once the object of a sovereign's love, and the affections of all his subjects. But my post was one of a very opposite nature, and

by dint of being perpetually called upon to enforce punishment, and inflict painful, though salutary, chastisement, it would seem as though mankind supposed inclinations were identified with those harsh duties the character of my employment imperatively imposed upon me."

"But," said I, "if you were thus compelled, as you say, to inflict much pain, at least you cannot deny that you had equal opportunities of doing great good."

"Womanlike," answered the duke, "you see but as each fresh idea colours the picture anew. The power of doing good, say you? Alas! you forget that my province was the issuing of *lettres de cachets.*"

"Still," interrupted I, "I am persuaded that his late majesty never commanded all the severity you practised."

"Not directly, I will admit; but he put into my hands the power of employing *lettres de cachets* for the good of the state, and I think he had no cause to complain of my want of zeal; and, as a devoted minister, I have frequently spared him the pain of issuing a rigorous command."

"And of the many *lettres de cachets* you have signed, are there none for which you now reproach yourself?"

"Certainly not; and I can truly assert that, if I erred in the number, it was rather in a deficiency than an overplus. I only hope the present king's reign may be as tranquil as was that of his predecessor; but I fear that, from his being too sparing of this means of governing. This is an error; it is taking a salutary restraint from the enemies of public repose; in a word, it is the Turkish bowstring modified by French urbanity. Did a courtier go so far as to judge the actions of his master, a *lettre de cachet* quickly restored him to a sense of his duty; did a politician become too clear-sighted, a *lettre de cachet* soon threw a veil over his eyes; it was as useful for the imprudent man who too rashly spoke of matters prudence would have concealed, as to him who presumed to reason upon points

with which he had nothing to do; for those who made a jest of or resisted the authority of the great; for such as offended our mistresses, for unaccommodating fathers or husbands, or for those impertinent beings who would fain aspire to being considered superior to ourselves in sense and wit, what better remedy could be devised than a *lettre de cachet?* They should be at the disposal of all magistrates, civil or ecclesiastical, as well as to all those who could worthily employ them?"

I knew very well that to attempt to bring back to reason a man whose ideas had been perverted from his boyhood, would, indeed, be a fruitless undertaking. I therefore sought to change the conversation by speaking of the late king.

"He was, indeed, a great monarch," replied M. de Saint Florentin.

"And ever warmly attached to our sex," rejoined I, seeking by this remark to draw the duke still further from his subject.

"Attached! ay, indeed," exclaimed *le petit saint;* "no one knows that better than myself; and there was not one female honoured by his notice for whom I have not written more than ten or twelve *lettres de cachets.*"

"Always excepting myself, my lord duke," said I, abruptly.

"Pardon me, madam, I make no exception; why not you as well as others? Consider, there was one for the duc de Choiseul, another for the duc de Praslin, a third for the bishop of Orleans, divers issued against several impertinent pamphleteers, without your ever having the trouble of soliciting them; and, besides these, permit me to add the one I had the honour of bringing to you on your own account."

"And how," said I, sternly, "could you venture to appear before me charged with such a commission, after the many professions of friendship you had made me?"

"Would you then have me depute to others the exercise of my own office? Besides, you were in my immediate department, and although you were displeased with me on the occasion, I think you will now admit, that it would have been highly derogatory had you been suffered to receive your *congé*, like a chambermaid, without a *lettre de cachet.* And was it not showing you all possible honour, that the instrument in question was brought by a minister of his majesty? Do you know that by such a step you were classed among the officers and secretaries of state?" While these singular, but characteristic, remarks threw me into a violent fit of laughter, *le petit saint,* noways disturbed, continued, in the most serious tone and manner, "And this reminds me of your brother-in-law, for whom I have been much grieved; his quitting Paris without a *lettre de cachet* went to my heart. Let him not reproach me with any omission, for I really presumed to solicit one of the king, who merely laughed in my face, and left me quite distressed at being unable to offer comte Jean this mark of my particular respect and consideration. But how could I exile him honourably, tied as my hands were by the refusal of the king? I trust to your friendship to vindicate my conduct with your brother-in-law, who, no doubt, is offended with what he deems my inattention, and to represent things as they really are. But," continued he, lowering his voice into a whisper, "I have endeavoured to atone for the unintentional wrong I have done, by drawing out a *lettre de cachet,* duly and regularly attested—this is it," pursued the duke, drawing a paper from his pocket; "give it to him, madam, that he may deposit it in his family archives, as a proof that he was banished with all due and becoming honours."

After this last delicate act of friendship, it was quite impossible to refuse M. de Saint Florentin the reconciliation he sought. Comte Jean and myself enjoyed this trait of a ruling passion, and laughed afresh when-

ever we recurred to it, while the duke strutted with all imaginable importance at the idea of the exploit he had performed; and when the poor duke died, the first inquiry made by my brother-in-law was, whether he had had sufficient warning of his approaching end to provide himself with the necessary *lettre de cachet*, dismissing him from this world to the next.

Another event, which occurred about this time, drew from us many bitter tears; I say us, for both comte Jean and myself equally deplored the premature death of his son, the vicomte Adolphe, who was killed in England, in some quarrel which arose in a gambling-house. This young man, endowed with an excellent natural disposition, great wit, and infinite grace, had become a worthless character; rash and imprudent, believing himself superior to all the world beside, he had contracted immense debts, and compromised his reputation; while his unkind and neglectful conduct towards his young and beautiful, as well as high-born wife, made both herself and all her family receive the tidings of his death without one sigh of regret.

This lady, whom I had so kindly treated during my prosperity, and who had followed my fortunes into exile, had lately behaved to me with a degree of coolness impossible to be mistaken; her short and ceremonious visits vexed me, and she availed herself of my remonstrances on the subject to cease them altogether. She went still further, and, upon the death of her husband, wore no mourning, and relinquished the name, arms, and livery of Du Barri for those of her own family.

Comte Jean, in his indignation at this insult to his son's memory, determined upon proceeding legally against the widow, who thus avowed her desertion of all those relations her marriage had given her; but the object of his anger, fearing the consequences of so disgraceful a lawsuit, hastened to avert the threatened blow, by bestowing her hand on a kinsman, who, as well as herself, bore the name of Tournon.

Previously to the death of Louis XV. I had ordered from the celebrated sculptor, Allegrain, a statue of Diana surprised at the bath by Acteon. The artist sent to inquire my pleasure respecting the completion of the work, and forgetful of the different situation in which I now stood, I desired that it might be sent me as soon as finished.

It has always been considered a most wonderful performance, although some of our modern critics are pleased to discover grievous faults in it; but I have the consolation to know that the works of the divine Boucher and the admirable Vanloo are not more worthily treated. The Diana of Allegrain was by all but the captious critics I have mentioned, universally admired for the grace and perfection of the design. The countenance was noble and feminine, and the soft and speaking features were considered far preferable to the stiff outlines generally bestowed on marble.

All Paris flocked to Luciennes to gaze at my Diana; I was delighted with the admiration it excited, for it seemed to me as though the glory of the artist was, in a manner, reflected on me who had commanded the statue. This mania of amateurs, ridiculous as it may appear, is yet highly serviceable to the arts. Self-love would fain possess the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the painter or sculptor, in order that it may become, in some degree, associated with their name, and so descend with them to posterity.

About this time I received frequent visits from the marquis de Montesquieu, who, with an assiduity which called forth my extreme surprise, evinced the most gallant desire to please and oblige me, spoke much of his master, whose esteem and high respect for me were only equalled by the ardent desire he felt to be enabled to give me a proof of his kind intentions. While these daily visits and great professions were just beginning to attract my attention, I was informed by Chon, that a relation of my husband was anxious to obtain a trifling situation in the gift of monsieur. My

sister-in-law besought of me to use my influence in obtaining it. It chanced that, on the evening of the same day in which this intimation had been made me, M. de Montesquieu came to my house; I explained my wish of aiding my relative in his endeavours to obtain the vacant appointment.

"Yet you will not succeed," replied M. de Montesquieu, "because I fear you would, at the outset, object to adopt the only course which could avail you."

"And what can that be?" asked I.

"Simply, to write a few lines with your own fair hand to monsieur, explaining your wishes."

"Oh, if that be all," cried I, "you shall soon see your master put to the proof; for I will, this instant, write a short letter to the prince, which I must beg of you to deliver."

"That I will do with the utmost pleasure," answered M. de Montesquieu; "for *you* only seem unconscious of the high credit you possess in more than one quarter."

I hastily seized a pen, and wrote the following petition:

"MONSEIGNEUR,—I address myself to your royal highness to request, not an act of justice, but a favour, one which will long render me your debtor, and by granting which, you will acquire fresh claims over hearts already firmly attached to you. Though now powerless myself, and reduced to insignificancy, I remember all the kindness you were once pleased to honour me with, and I venture to flatter myself, that you have neither lost the recollection of them nor the inclination still to continue them."

Then followed the formal demand of the place I wished to obtain, and my letter concluded with the customary compliments.

On the following day the marquis de Montesquieu brought me the promise of the place I had solicited, and the following billet:

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—I most sincerely thank you for the opportunity you have afforded me of

proving how kindly I am disposed towards you; be assured I can never be otherwise than most friendly in my feelings, and nothing could be more agreeable to my wishes than to meet with some means of assuring you in person, how truly I shall ever be,

"Yours to command, &c. &c."

This letter greatly delighted me; and by carefully weighing its expressions, I could easily perceive that monsieur had some powerful motive for desiring to see me, but for what reason I could not divine. When next I saw M. de Montesquieu, he inquired whether I felt satisfied with the conduct of monsieur.

"How can I fail being so," answered I, "after so much kindness on his part? But, perhaps, you think I have not sufficiently expressed my gratitude."

"Were I you, madam," cried M. de Montesquieu, "I should prefer telling him from my own lips what I thought of his goodness; such condescension as his should not be disdained."

"Far be it from me to despise the condescending goodness of his highness," exclaimed I; "and nothing would be more gratifying to me than an opportunity of presenting my homage to your royal master; but how is such an event to occur? Her majesty will not be pleased should I present myself at Versailles; and as for asking monsieur to honour me with a visit, my respect forbids my hinting at such a thing, although I may be permitted to state that I can number some of the greatest personages in France among my visitors."

"Assuredly," replied M. de Montesquieu, "after the guests I have met here, not even the most fastidious need excuse themselves from paying their respects to you. But you are aware how imperative it is for his royal highness to observe the utmost caution in all that concerns his acquaintance with you. He has the misfortune to be mistrusted by the queen, and that very circumstance compels him to observe a circumspection for which you cannot blame him; whilst, on

the other hand, I know all the pleasure he would experience in having an hour's conversation with you."

"Well, then," said I, "I see but one way of satisfying our mutual desires, and obeying the dictates of prudence; and that is, for him to dig a subterraneous passage from Versailles, and I one from Luciennes; and when we meet under ground, surely we may enjoy a friendly conversation without fear of observation."

The marquis laughed at my idea, and quitted me for the purpose, as he said, of seeing how far it would admit of being carried into execution.

CHAPTER XI.

A counsellor—Baron de Sugere—Interview with monsieur.

I HAD, at this critical moment, no small need of some able counsellor to direct me in the path I should pursue; and, most opportunely for me, I received a visit from comte Jean, between whom and myself a degree of coolness had lately existed, arising from my being no longer able to supply the extravagances of my brother-in-law, who had, indeed, been at all times rather an object of fear than love with me. Still, I could always rely upon his prudence and discretion in matters of importance, especially when the result might, very possibly, be conducive to his own advantage; in fact, I must do comte Jean the justice to say, that however his enemies may have misrepresented him, he was frank and brave, polished and gallant in his manners, and a sincere lover of the fine arts; his many defects were attributable to the low and depraved company he unfortunately associated with; but, upon the whole, his good qualities fully equalled his bad.

When I related to him all that had passed between the marquis de Feyensac and myself, and when I had concluded, he replied,

"My dear sister, all this, which seems to you so important, is, in reality, not worth one moment's consideration. Monsieur is not made of the same materials as his grandfather and younger brother, and you may rely upon it, your beauty has nothing to do with the eagerness he manifests to see you. Some political calculation has suggested that you can assist him, and it may be, that he suspects your being in possession of some state secret; I advise you to listen to what he has to say, and to weigh well how you reply to him, if that last supposition be correct. Be not too eager to reveal whatever you may know; let nothing but a handsome offer unseal your lips, and see that you are paid beforehand."

"But I know nothing worth relating," answered I.

"If you really know nothing, I have the less need to warn you against an over ready communication; but still you may turn this affair to advantage, by feigning a knowledge you perhaps do not exactly possess; and, when a handsome sum is named as the reward of your secret, why, it will be easy to pass off some imaginary tale upon your credulous auditor."

"But surely this would be neither more nor less than a downright falsehood," cried I.

"E'en call it as you will, my fastidious sister-in-law; term it, if you think proper, a mere fiction, a poetical license, such as your romance writers and literati of the day permit themselves to use."

"Such, for instance, as those we find in the works of M. de la Harpe and M. de Saint Lambert," said I.

"Precisely," replied comte Jean, bursting into a fit of laughter; but his good humour soon forsook him, when he found me obstinately bent upon refusing his advice, and equally decided not to abandon, upon the present occasion, that frank and candid behaviour I had hitherto invariably pursued.

It was not long ere my resolution was put to the trial. Monsieur had by no means relinquished his desire of a private meeting, but had deferred his wishes in the hope of my being the first to seek it. He knew but little of my real disposition when he formed such an expectation, for, with the volatility which characterised me, I forgot, in an instant, all events and circumstances, except those by which I was immediately surrounded; and I had well nigh forgotten the whole affair, when his envoy extraordinary, the marquis de Montesquieu Feyensac, again appeared before me, evidently wishing me to be the first to lead to the subject which led him to Luciennes; and so little effect had the lessons of comte Jean had upon me, that I easily fell in with his intention, by inquiring when he intended to lead me to the feet of his royal master?

"Never!" replied the marquis, with the most perfect gallantry; "monsieur knows better the place to which your merit entitles you. Oh, madam, you know not how eagerly his royal highness looks for an opportunity of personally expressing the lively affection he bears you. I am authorized to entreat of you to come to-morrow, in the afternoon, in a plain grey carriage without pomp or state, to a delightful little mansion situated in Les Porcherons, where you will find my master impatient for your arrival."

I accepted the rendezvous, and the marquis gave me further instructions how I might direct my coachman to be punctual as to time and place. I merely stipulated for permission to bring Geneviève with me, to prevent any unpleasant observations.

"Why, indeed, no one can tell what may happen," replied M. de Feyensac, smiling.

"Nothing, sir," answered I, "can proceed from his royal highness inconsistent with his character as a gentleman and man of honour; besides, the prudence of monsieur is concerned in observing the strictest propriety in an affair so serious as the present."

"Its being of so serious a nature," returned the marquis, "would be the very reason why he should seek to enliven it by some agreeable recreation."

"Does your mission extend so far as to make me an offer of the prince's heart, my lord?"

"Supposing such were the case ——"

"I can only reply, that one so calculated to plead his own cause as monsieur, would never employ an ambassador in the case."

M. de Montesquieu, although evidently a little stung by my retort, soon recovered himself sufficiently to add, "Well then, madam, to-morrow we shall expect yourself and companion." I promised to be punctual, and we parted.

I could not meet with comte Jean, and I was unwilling to communicate what had just transpired through the medium of a letter or message; during my uncertainty how to act, the maréchale de Mirepoix was announced. I was truly glad to see her, for amid all her faults, I knew I might rely with safety on her discretion; I had, therefore, no hesitation in laying all my difficulties before her. Her reply was promptly given, and in the precise manner in which comte Jean had expressed himself.

"You will not make any very great matter of this," said she, "and I will tell you why; monsieur fancies you can forward his interests in some way or other, and, therefore, seeks an interview which he would fain have you attribute to his regard for you. Pay him in his own coin—give nothing for nothing. I assure you his royal highness will fully enter into the negotiation, for a more able calculator does not exist."

"But," said I, "I can scarcely recover my surprise at the unexpected honour he does me."

"My dear child," returned madame de Mirepoix, "you are always the same thoughtless creature; but I trust your ready wit will assist you when the time arrives at which the purpose of your being invited by monsieur is explained. Do not throw away the chance

thus offered you; for, sordid and selfish as is the prince, he may yet aid you greatly. He is at present powerful at court, and I feel persuaded that his influence is more likely to increase with events than fall off. Make him your friend by all means."

"Alas!" cried I, "I have long since abandoned all idea of regaining that rank and power I possessed at Versailles."

"Be it so," rejoined the maréchale, "but still there can be no harm in having a friend and ally there."

Madame de Mirepoix proceeded to point out so energetically all the advantages that must ensue from being on friendly terms with monsieur, that I awaited with anxiety the hour fixed for my interview with him; upon this important occasion I paid more than usual attention to my toilette, in order to prove to the prince my desire of appearing to advantage in his eyes. Attended by Geneviève, I proceeded to the appointed place, and, as I drew up, a carriage drove furiously past, as though the coachman had received peremptory orders to be before us. A glance through the window showed me his royal highness hurrying to the place of meeting, evidently with the view of making his punctuality no small merit in my eyes, and, as I had not the least wish to deprive him of the pleasure of being considered the most exact, I pulled the checkstring and bade my coachman slacken his pace, in order that the royal carriage might be some minutes in advance of my own. At length I alighted in the hall of the mansion agreed upon, where the marquis de Montesquieu met me, and gave me his arm. A sort of housekeeper-like person took charge of Geneviève, while my conductor, whispering to me, "All will go well, your very looks carry triumph and victory," led me to the apartment where monsieur awaited me.

Many years had elapsed since I last saw him, and in that time his figure had grown into perfect manhood, tall, and inclined to embonpoint; his broad and muscular frame bore little resemblance to the slightly

formed youth I had last beheld him; his features were very fine, but a deep and crafty expression lurked in the corners of his deep blue eye. He approached me with his usual natural graceful manner, and gallantly kissing my hand, he raised me as I would have knelt before him, and, conducting me to an arm-chair, prayed me to be seated, while he took a seat beside me. I hesitated to accept his condescending offer, but pressing my hand with gentle violence, he exclaimed,

"Take it, I beseech you, madam, 'tis but your due." When I had obeyed him, he looked at me for some minutes in silence, and then observed, "How deeply and sincerely do I regret, madame la comtesse, that you should so soon have been removed from that court which you were born to ornament."

"Pardon me," answered I, "for reminding your royal highness that I have been too well replaced to render it possible for any person to miss my presence."

"As far as regards an ostentatious show of rank and wealth, 'tis true, the present mistress of Versailles plays her part well; but where shall we look for that beauty, that grace, which adorned the court in the reign of my illustrious grandsire?"

"Indeed," replied I, "the illustrious lady who now presides at court is well worthy the universal admiration she has excited; and ill would it become me to pronounce her name but with the most exalted respect."

"And yet," continued his royal highness, "this very queen, whose cause you are advocating, was the first to direct a degree of severity being exercised towards you, unworthy of her as a princess and a woman. At least, I may congratulate myself in having no share in such unjust and arbitrary measures. But your offence was one of the most heinous in the eyes of Marie Antoinette; you were found guilty of possessing charms as captivating as her own, and she could not brook the idea of suffering so formidable a rival to dispute with her the exclusive right of subjugating all hearts."

" Still," cried I, " I can never forget the generosity with which the queen consigned my offences to oblivion; such goodness on her part would compensate for severity much greater than that I received at her hands."

" And do you really believe she has forgotten your former cause of offence?" asked monsieur, fixing his keen light eye upon me.

" I have been told so," answered I.

" And you credit the pleasing tale, of course?"

" Alas," cried I, " why should I doubt it? Wherefore should her majesty, all powerful as she is, feign a disposition to pardon one so humbled and fallen as myself?"

" Why, indeed, unless the fear of provoking you into a disclosure of some family details your intimate connection with the late king might have put you in possession of, could be assigned as a reason for her deeming it more politic to conciliate than provoke."

" Her majesty need have no fears," returned I, " Louis XV. was by no means fond of entertaining me with any family affairs."

" Did he, then, never intrust you with any secrets of importance?"

" Oh, that would be making a bold assertion," replied I; " but, indeed, I have such a wretched memory."

" Still," rejoined the prince, " I must crave your pardon for surmising that some of the facts intrusted to your confidential ear, in all probability, yet find a place in your recollection."

" Indeed," cried I, smiling at the determined perseverance of my companion, " your royal highness is much mistaken."

" Madam," answered monsieur, drawing his chair still closer to mine, and gazing, with much earnestness, in my face, " I must satisfy my present curiosity even at the risk of displeasing you."

" Believe me," cried I, " my gratitude to your royal

highness will render me but too anxious to furnish you with any information I may possess; and should I not be enabled to reply to your interrogatories as clearly and satisfactorily as you could wish, at least, you shall not accuse me of any want of candour."

"Thus, then, I put you to the proof," replied monsieur; and, lowering his voice to a whisper, he commenced a series of questions by far too strange and singular to be committed to writing.

At this moment, the cautious hints thrown out by my brother-in-law and madame de Mirepoix rose in my recollection; and while I clearly saw the difficult situation in which I was placed, I resolved, if possible, to escape from it, without compromising myself, and, thank heaven, I managed so well, that if my replies did not exactly satisfy the mind of monsieur, at least, they prevented his feeling any decided disappointment or dissatisfaction.

When we had exhausted the more serious part of our subject, we passed to the lighter topics, and by turns had discussed the merits of all the court of Louis XV.; madame de Grammont and the duc de Choiseul were not the last to be brought on our *tapis*. Monsieur was very curious to learn what had been the sentiments of his grandfather towards these two persons.

"His late majesty," replied I, "entertained as high an opinion of the talents and capacity of the brother, as he held the intriguing spirit of the sister in dislike and mistrust; he was extremely anxious to have continued the duke at the head of affairs, and would have given much to have seen me on terms of friendly goodwill with his favourite minister; it was not my fault if the duke was deprived of his situation; I did all in my power to conciliate him, and no doubt he would willingly have condescended to fix himself firmer than ever in office through my poor means as well as his excellent wife, had not his haughty and imperious sister urged him to court destruction and ruin rather than make terms with me."

"You must hate this violent and vindictive woman," exclaimed the duke.

"Far from it," replied I; "I even admire the consistency and persevering energy with which she has ever played her part."

"Whom, then, do you select as objects of dislike?"

"No one."

"And who are those who excite your contempt?"

"Pardon me, my lord, but among the crowds I continually meet it would be invidious to make a selection."

I know not whether there was any thing very remarkable in these words, but they appeared to strike the prince forcibly.

"You have never been rightly appreciated or understood," cried he, "and your enemies alone have taken upon themselves to judge your conduct."

"And of what have they found me culpable? My early errors and imprudences I freely acknowledge; I confess, too, to many unthinking words and expressions; but surely all these were never sufficient to draw down upon me the torrent of libels, pamphlets, satires, and epigrams, with which I have been overwhelmed. None can accuse me of disloyalty towards your royal relations, nor is it in the power of those who have most bitterly persecuted me to call me perfidious, ungrateful, or vindictive, even under the wrongs they heaped upon me; thus, although deprived of him who was my able and powerful protector, I am still regarded and respected by my friends, and the malice of those who sought to injure me has failed to render me unhappy."

"Providence would never permit that," cried the prince with energy, "were it only for the immense service you have rendered the nation in delivering it from the old parliaments; and I, for one, hold myself most particularly your debtor."

"I cannot accept the thanks and praises your royal highness is pleased to bestow on me," said I, "for,

believe me, I was a most ignorant and unconscious performer in the great work you allude to. The black robes were a continual source of torment and disquietude to your august grandfather, and I, therefore, resolved upon persuading him to free himself from their annoyance; this he did, and tranquillity was the result. But since his present majesty deems it advisable to reestablish them in office, I am equally pleased that such should be the case."

"But, my dear madam," interrupted monsieur, "I have to pray your pardon for engrossing your valuable time in discussing matters so dry and uninteresting; I will not try your patience too far, and must, however unwillingly, restore you to liberty, with the hope of very shortly meeting again."

"I shall always be at the command of your royal highness," returned I, courtseying.

The prince bowed gracefully, and ringing the bell, the marquis de Montesquieu appeared, to whose care I was again consigned; and monsieur, gallantly kissing my hand, disappeared at the opposite door. While I was led to my carriage, where I found Geneviève already seated, the marquis, as he handed me in, whispered, "Be prudent and silent." I bowed assent, and my vehicle rolled rapidly along.

CHAPTER XII.

Agitations and uneasiness—Observations of comte Jean and the maréchale de Mirepoix—M. de Maurepas—The American war—Franklin in Paris—He visits Luciennes—Voltaire.

My agitation continued long after my return from this visit; the prince's views were now known to me, and the knowledge of them made me tremble, for well I knew all the danger that would accrue to myself, should I once be involved in any cabal or intrigue. The quick eye of Geneviève soon discovered that my excursion had not been productive of much pleasure to me, and with the tender anxiety which characterised her, she exerted herself to the utmost to rouse my mind from the heavy gloom in which it appeared plunged; but my meditations were too deep to yield to her efforts, and the moment I reached Paris, where I had arranged to pass several days, I despatched a messenger in quest of comte Jean, to whom I was anxious to relate the particulars of my late interview, while I resolved to observe a prudent reserve towards madame de Mirepoix, of whose friendship and discretion I did not feel equally secure.

My brother-in-law, who, upon this occasion, was not to be met with at any of his usual haunts, came to me quite early on the following morning, when I repeated all that had passed between the prince and myself. Comte Jean looked with a serious brow while I was speaking, and when I had concluded, he said,

"My dear sister, if you have faithfully related your conversation with his royal highness, I do not see any just cause for believing your peace or safety in any way compromised; the only thing to be dreaded is,

that the candour with which you have answered such questions as were put to you, may involve you in the necessity of answering others. Let the apprehensions you at present suffer teach you to be more on your guard and less communicative for the future. Who can say whether already much more may not be attributed to you than you really said? I am fully of opinion with that ancient writer, who said, 'Give me but two lines of my enemy's writing, and four of his words, and I want no more to get him hanged.' "*

"My dear brother," cried I, "you are not very encouraging."

"I merely suppose a case," answered he, "but it may prove a true one. The fact is, you are not fitted for intrigue; leave this one to me, and trouble yourself no further about it."

"I am resolved never again to meet monsieur," exclaimed I.

"Perhaps you are right," said comte Jean, "there seems little chance of his becoming your lover, and I cannot suppose you would ever become his creature. Were madam, his royal spouse, defunct, I possibly might not give you this advice."

"At any rate, I am to understand that your present counsel is against my seeing the prince again."

"Why, not exactly that; but I should recommend you in your next interview to manifest such a degree of reserve, as shall effectually show the impossibility of your being drawn into any kind of intrigue or scheme. If you suffer yourself to be prevailed on to join the ambitious views of monsieur you are a lost woman."

I promised a steady adherence to his advice, and in the midst of my plans and resolutions, madame de Mirepoix was announced.

* We know not to what writer Comte Jean alludes, and in all probability, the passage is ill quoted by madame du Barri; but the phrase bears a great resemblance to that of Laubardemont.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

"Well, my dear," exclaimed she, running up in haste, "have you seen the prince? were we right or wrong in our conjectures? what did he give or promise you?"

"Nothing of any sort, my good friend," said I, forcing a smile; "his only anxiety seemed to be to sound me respecting every person admitted to the intimacy of his grandfather; to question me as to his intentions of making peace or war with different nations; indeed, he asked me so many questions, that my poor memory has really forgotten them by this time."

"Ah! I suppose the prince, with his usual tact and reserve, contrived to conceal his own motives; he is, indeed, a most prudent gentleman, far too much so for his age," replied the maréchale, with a spite she could scarcely conceal; "there is no getting at the bottom of his vast carefulness and precision. By the way, I must leave you, for I have to call on madame du Deffant."

"Does that lady," said I, "still retain her desire of seeing me?"

"No," returned the maréchale; "since the death of the king she has no longer any pretext."

"I thought curiosity was a sufficient reason."

"Put yourself in her place. When she expressed a desire to see you, the Choiseuls were disgraced and you in high favour; while now, of course, my dear, madame du Deffant very naturally wishes to keep in with all parties."

Towards the middle of winter a general opinion prevailed that M. de Maurepas would not survive the end of the month. That worthy character was somewhat addicted to the pleasures of the table, and consequently did not, at all times, listen to the dictates of temperance and sobriety, the consequences of which were unusually severe upon the present occasion. A dreadful attack of indigestion placed him within an inch of the grave. Physicians crouded around him, and already rumours of apoplexy were spread through

out the château. The king, dismayed at the intelligence, ascended in haste to the apartment of his sick friend, which was situated immediately over his own; while the queen convoked her privy-council in order to debate upon the expected change.

It proved, however, a false alarm, and after a grave consultation, the medical attendants were compelled to give up all idea of apoplexy for the present, and content themselves with designating the complaint, under which the prime minister was suffering, an attack of indigestion. This piece of information dispersed at once the various chimeras and conjectures which busied all minds; everything became tranquil again, and the court was hushed of the violent commotion which had agitated it.

M. de Maurepas, apprized of the various speculations to which his illness had given rise, observed, "They are in a prodigious hurry for my death. I waited five-and-twenty years for the office I now hold, let them have patience for half that period, and I will promise to leave them in possession of it."

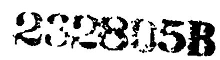
About the same time the comte d'Aiguillon coming to see him, and perceiving that his chimney smoked, exclaimed,

"My dear sir, this must be a great nuisance to an invalid, you must have one of the Franklin stoves, and that will effectually cure the mischief."

"A Franklin stove!" cried the minister. "Would you then exclude the viscount Stormond from coming to warm himself by my fire?"

In order to comprehend the full force of these words, I must tell you that lord Stormond was the English ambassador at the court of France, and that the king had just received, not by the same title, but in the same office, the celebrated Franklin, plenipotentiary from the colonies of North America.

In one of your last letters, my dear friend, while you encourage me to persevere with my epistolary confessions, you scold me for omitting every thing of a



political nature, and bid me suppose you another Epimenidus, who, upon awaking from a long sleep of five-and-twenty years, was utterly in ignorance of all that had been passing around him, and who, of course, would wish to be informed how matters had been progressing. Well then, I will make the attempt to gratify you by relating the particulars of the American war, even at the risk of provoking your laughter at my unskilful manner of speaking of a country of which I know nothing, save through the newspapers.

The English colonies of North America became weary of the heavy yoke the tyranny of the mother country imposed upon them, and their remonstrances having failed to procure any alleviation of their grievances, they rose in rebellion, and at length proceeded to that independent war in which France took so lively an interest. The Americans, headed by the celebrated Washington, sustained the struggle with equal constancy and courage. Their first defeats were far from disheartening them, and they persisted more resolutely than ever in their resolution of constituting themselves a free people.

However favourable our government might have been to their emancipation, it hesitated some time ere it openly declared in favour of the Americans, whom it furnished secretly with money, arms, and ammunition. It was in such an enterprise that M. de Beaumarchais commenced his career.

The marquis de Lafayette, at the age of nineteen, had just espoused the daughter of the duc d'Ayen, quitted his bride, family, friends, and all the pleasures of the capital, to assist the insurgents with his sword and fortune. This resolution converted him (in the eyes of his countrymen as well as those of the new world) into a hero, and both hemispheres resounded with his praises. This same person is the identical marquis de Lafayette who has since taken so active a part against our government; he has certainly tarnished his former laurels by so doing, although, there is no doubt

but that, during the struggle in America, he acquired such a taste for republican principles, as induced him, upon his return, to endeavour to introduce them into France. I am by no means one of the marquis's admirers, and yet I cannot deny him the praise of being perfectly disinterested in his views of a reformation in the present form of government.

The Americans were extremely impatient to see themselves formally recognised as an independent nation by France and Spain. With a view to expediting so important a measure, they had sent Messrs. Deane and Benjamin Franklin as plenipotentiaries to the French court; the former of these personages created but little interest, while the justly acquired celebrity of the latter effectually prevented him from escaping unobserved. He became the rage in France; a perfect mania existed to see and converse with him, and to obtain these coveted advantages, all ranks and classes contended with the most violent eagerness. Franklin was, indeed, well worthy the trouble of being thus courted and sought after, for of all the old men of Europe, he was at once the handsomest, most frank, sensible, and well-informed, yet simple as a child, and veiling beneath the most unassuming manners a depth of political talent few have ever possessed. His open and ingenuous character won over all hearts to his cause, and none who had the gratification of listening to the persuasive eloquence of this highly-gifted man, hesitated for one moment to wish well to the American cause. Without his aid, I am persuaded the French monarch would never have declared in their favour.

With much good sense Franklin at first kept aloof from the crowd with which he was besieged, and this reserve only still further excited French curiosity.

" Pardon me," was the answer of the kind-hearted old plenipotentiary; " but until the independence of my country is fully recognised, I cannot accept your kindness and friendly invitations; reasons of the great-

est importance restrict me to a life of privacy until then."

"But the princess of ——, the duchess of ——, the marchioness ——, are all looking for the happiness of seeing you."

"Acknowledge my country free, and I will submit to be led whithersoever you think proper."

"Assuredly we must do so, since your society is to be obtained upon no other terms." And the most lively solicitations were made to the king and comte de Maurepas on the subject.

That minister shrunk from the very idea of a war which must drag him from his loved repose; while the queen viewed with horror the picture of a nation where the subjects were in open revolt against their sovereign. The king, with his usual plain good sense, weighed the question in all its bearings, and while, as a Frenchman, he saw all the advantages of depriving England of the brightest jewel in her crown, he yet, as a king, dreaded the effect so dangerous an example of republicanism might have on the minds of a people ever eager after novelty and change.

A bold step on the part of Franklin accelerated the decision of the king. The American envoy, weary of the repeated delays he met with, wrote peremptorily to the minister, requesting either a formal reply to his mission, or passports for his return home, within the next four-and-twenty hours. His terrified colleague expected no less than an order for their commitment to the Bastille as the reward for such temerity; but his fears were agreeably dissipated when an answer arrived signifying that government had at length resolved upon recognising as a nation those who were in open rebellion against their parent country. This step necessarily involved a declaration of war against England, and due preparations were accordingly made. Its commencement was glorious to France from the splendid action between the frigate called *La Belle*

Poule, commanded by M. de la Clochetterie, who bravely sustained a contest with several English vessels.

These, my dear V., are, as nearly as I can recollect, the particulars of this important epoch in our history, and henceforward I shall merely speak of it by chance, or when any other event is interwoven with it. You may easily suppose that I was not the last to visit Mr. Franklin, who, although he saw but little company, punctually returned the different visits paid him. I was fortunate enough to be quite alone when he favoured me with a call.

He was a man advanced in years, tall, and his hair quite white; he wore neither powder nor sword, and was dressed in a broad, square cut, brown coat, without any kind of ornament, square-toed shoes, tied with large bows, a dark-coloured waistcoat, a broad round hat turned up at the sides, in his hand he held a thick, ivory-headed, walking-stick, and although this costume neither partook of the foppery of our *petits maîtres*, nor the heavy grandeur of our financiers, its very simplicity charmed and heightened as it was by the pleasing and graceful manner of the wearer, induced a comparison between the talented man who now appeared before us and our own statesmen, by no means to the credit of the latter.

Mr. Franklin appeared entirely at his ease during his visit to Luciennes, praised the beauty of the place, the magnificent prospects it afforded, and commended the good taste displayed in its grounds as well as the construction of the château; then, with easy politeness, he thanked me for the favourable opinion I had testified of his country; but, continued he, the graces have ever been found the inseparable companions of liberty.

"Do you know," replied I, "that the latter word is not as yet naturalized in France?"

"I am well aware," returned my companion with a smile, "that we bring an hitherto foreign divinity, but still, I trust, that through the wisdom of a monarch

so devoted to his people as is Louis XVI. she will find a favourite home in France."

"Under a former reign your visit would not have been attended with such happy success."

"So you perceive, madam, a propitious Providence directed our footsteps hither precisely at the right moment; heaven smiles on us, and will grant a favourable issue to our undertaking, through the intervention of your generous nation. May our hearts be ever grateful for the benefits we receive."

"Republics are generally stigmatized as being ungrateful; have a care, my good sir."

"I would only venture to observe in defence of such a charge, that we have no court in America."

"Your satire is severe, but just," answered I. "And I too have been guilty of the general error of looking upon the Americans as little better than savages."

"Each nation has its prejudices, and us Americans have believed, upon the assertion of the English, that the French were a nation which subsisted solely on frogs."

"Mercy upon me," cried I, "what a notion! but however, it does not appear to have any effect in preventing the king of England from always styling himself king of France, a title which used to make the late king shrug up his shoulders. You will see that king George will long continue to call himself king of America."

"If he be no more our king than he is that of France, it will make very little difference to us, whatever he may think proper to style himself."

"I have been told that the English monarch has vowed never to resign the American states but with life."

"Well, we must not desire the death of any person, so may king George live as long as he can, so that Louis XVI. of France deigns to recognise our independence."

Our conversation did not end here, but I will ex-

cuse your hearing the remainder, any more than the many compliments Franklin fancied himself obliged to pay me in return for my good wishes for the success of the colonies; and after a visit of nearly an hour, the excellent American took his leave. I was enchanted with his good sense and pleasing manners, and in very good humour with myself for the way in which I had borne my part in the conversation. My reverie was interrupted by the arrival of madame de Mirepoix.

"Was not that Mr Franklin who just now quitted you?" asked she.

I replied by repeating the particulars of our late conversation.

"All that sounds very well," answered the lady, "but for my own part, I am a staunch royalist. A republic! why, my dear countess, what would become of us under a form of government where no court existed, and where no one could distribute the treasures of the state among his friends and mistresses? Really, the very idea savours of famine and starvation."

"But consider the charm of being wholly free as the Americans now are."

"Free, indeed! nonsense! how can a man be free when he has to exist by the sweat of his brow, and when the only road to honour must be by becoming a labourer or mechanic? For heaven's sake consider the baneful effects of such a system. What would become of such as you and I were it to become prevalent in France? Just imagine what a change; no more gay and elegant courtiers; but the reins of government held by the coarse, rude hands of a vulgar set, who would never have the soul to bestow one liberal pension, and from whose clumsy fingers not a single sous could be extracted. For my own part, I never hear of insurgents but it puts me in a rage, and for that reason I have never been to see Franklin."

The maréchale might have been right, and that which is hourly passing around us, convinces me of it. But in 1778 such sentiments appeared utterly absurd

and unreasonable, and my reply only served to draw down upon me fresh reproofs from my friend. I allowed her to scold away quite at her ease, and did not the less triumph in the gallantry Mr. Franklin had evinced towards me.

About the same period Paris had to boast of the company of another equally celebrated person with him I have been telling you of—a man whose fame has filled the whole world—M. de Voltaire; who, after having been absent, or rather exiled, from Paris for a considerable period, all at once took it into his head to revisit it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Voltaire in Paris—Winter diversions—A rencontre with the duchesse de Grammont—Death of Voltaire—The duchesse Diane de Polignac.

The open and declared war which Voltaire had ever carried on against the clergy, had converted them into his most bitter and irreconcilable enemies. The late king, who possessed the most excellent good sense, readily perceived that religion and royalty were so closely bound in the same interests, that any attempts to injure the one, must necessarily militate against the safety of the other. Now the philosopher of Ferney dealt out maxims of independence and freedom of opinion, ill calculated to support government, or please a monarch so jealous of his authority as was Louis XV.

The king, therefore, happy to remove from Paris a man whose eager thirst for admiration made him even disregardless of overthrowing a whole state, so that he could but attain his own vain purposes, cared but little

about bringing him back to the capital, and although not formally and officially prohibited from returning thither, M. de Voltaire was informed by an equally direct channel, that it was his majesty's pleasure he should confine himself to his estate at Ferney. This much I have often heard from the late king himself, who disliked the sarcasms and biting taunts of Voltaire as much as he did the refractoriness of his parliaments. Disdaining to single out the lord of Ferney, he yet had him most particularly in view when he inveighed against those writers who, as he said, were sapping the foundations of both church and state by their philosophical dissertations or sarcastic observations. "Our modern Utopians," would he cry, "are the greatest enemies to public peace, and should the monarchy be ever endangered, these would-be reformers will have to answer for it."

I used to deny the truth of so bold an assertion; but the king, with a foreboding shake of the head, would reply, "Such things will not occur in my reign, but only let my successor become a philosopher himself, or encourage others to be so, and we shall see."

During the reign of Louis XV. all my solicitations were ineffectual to obtain the recall of M. de Voltaire; but upon the accession of Louis XVI., the new monarch was besieged with applications in favour of an old man, who, it was said, had been for the last eight years upon the very brink of the grave.

Monsieur was among the most ardent advocates in the cause of the philosopher, while the queen, whose mind had been favourably disposed, joined her entreaties, and the whole of the royal family, with the exception of the comte d'Artois, followed her example. The court and ministers, with M. de Maurepas at their head, came to implore the pardon of their idol, but, like his august grandsire, the new king hated the very name of the sage of Ferney, and after a protracted negotiation of four years, a cold and unwilling assent was alone obtained from Louis XVI., whose natural

weakness, and vacillating character gave way before such persevering entreaties.

The news of the victory thus gained was despatched with due haste and befitting secrecy to M. de Voltaire, who determined upon keeping the welcome intelligence to himself until the very last minute. He, therefore, announced to his friends, that as his niece, madame Denis, was about to visit Paris in company with the marquis and marquise de Villette, he should profit by her absence to proceed to Dijon, in order to conduct a law-suit he had pending there. These precautions, taken with a view of blinding all eyes either at Paris or at Ferney, perfectly answered his design, and not the least idea was entertained by any of the opposing parties of the real nature of his intentions, consequently, no obstacle was thrown in the way of his intended journey. Had the high dignitaries of the church interfered with the proposed triumphant return of the philosopher, any application made by them would have been promptly and readily seconded; but no suspicion was entertained, and M. de Voltaire reached Paris in perfect safety. But before I proceed to relate to you many hitherto unknown particulars of his abode in Paris, I must just give a slight account of various events I should inevitably forget were I to defer them for a longer period.

The winter had set in with unwonted severity, and the hard frost which covered the ground awoke in the mind of Marie Antoinette the joyous days of her early youth at Vienna, when the season of frost and snow brought with it the cheerful amusement of the *traineau*, or snow-sledge; accordingly, the queen exhibited one in Paris, shaped like a large flower-basket, over which winged genii extended their protecting wings; draperies of blue and gold lined the interior, and the whole was drawn by snow-white horses of matchless beauty, whose harness was composed of blue velvet, the buckles and appurtenances of which were pure gold.

The *traineau* of the comte d'Artois was equally

magnificent; it was fashioned like a large double shell of rose colour and silver, at the top of which a swan, most ingeniously and beautifully contrived, appeared to elevate her majestic head as though sailing on the wings of the wind. The court, in general, vied with each other in sporting *traineaux* of the most costly and splendid description. The course they glided over began at the Bastille and proceeded round the boulevards, which were thronged by a crowd of spectators eager to witness the novel amusement their queen had introduced.

The brilliant pageant was not, however, beheld by all with approval or satisfaction, and many cries arose at so prodigal a waste of the country's money during a period when so much national distress existed. Great blame fell upon the queen, who was, likewise, the continual object of a crowd of satirical poems, in which, indeed, the whole of the royal family came in for their share. But without giving themselves any concern about them, it only served to furnish a fresh motive for drowning the voice of the *canaille* in new and varied amusements. Versailles became the very theatre of pleasure, and balls, routs, plays, and every kind of amusement were carried on with greater zest than ever.

But to return to M. de Voltaire, who reached Paris on the 11th of the month, and took up his abode with the marquis de Villette at the corner of the Rue Racine on the Quai des Theatains, in an apartment on the second floor.

Never did sovereign produce such a sensation; his presence reduced his enemies to silence, and elevated the adoration of his admirers into a species of fanaticism. Nothing was spoken of but him, and the slightest trait related of him assumed a form of importance; his words were noted down, and an exact account kept of every remark, meaning or unmeaning, sarcastic or friendly; his smile, and even his silence, was deemed worthy of being scrupulously observed and related. Curiosity was on the *qui vive* to learn when he rose,

dined, and went to rest; in what clothes and style he dressed; what were his usual habits and customs, &c. &c. His portrait was to be seen every where, and a crowd of worshippers and admirers continually surrounded him with the most violent and extravagant praise and homage; those of highest rank appeared to think it an honour to humble themselves to a level with that of the philosopher; all celebrity fled before his, and the proudest bent before him; in a word, there was but one sole engrossing and overpowering idea, and that was M. de Voltaire.

From the moment his arrival was known, his doors were besieged by lords and ladies, artists, philosophers, literati, citizens, and all ranks of people; the capital as well as environs of Paris appeared to send forth fresh multitudes, all eager and anxious to approach this illustrious old man, and, as you may easily conceive, the mania quickly extended to myself. I was not long ere I gratified my wishes of beholding him. I had forgotten his former indifference and neglect, and remembered only my own desire of expressing the ardent admiration with which I regarded him. I, therefore, went unattended, and at a time when he was not expecting visitors. Voltaire, who was then busily engaged with his tragedy of Irène, was sitting in complete dishabille. When the duc de Richelieu and myself were announced, our names sounded like a thunderclap in the ears of the vain old man, and he hesitated at first whether or not to admit us. The duke, suspecting the fact, profited by the terms of intimacy with which he was upon with Voltaire to enter the chamber of the demigod, with whom he held the following conversation.

"Good-morrow, my dear Voltaire, the comtesse du Barri is in the adjoining room waiting your leisure to receive her."

"Madame du Barri! What, in heaven's name, shall I do?"

"Nay, nay, my good friend, be under no apprehen-

sions, I conjure you; my fair friend has no hostile intentions, I can promise you."

"Ah, monsieur le maréchal, how happy are you in being still young and handsome. I fear my wrinkled face will shock her; tell me, can I present myself thus before the very queen of beauty?"

"Let me assure you she will see you but through your works."

"Pardon me; I would owe something to myself alone, and would fain take time to set off this old countenance to the best advantage."

"Well, then, merely throw on a *robe de chambre*; such an apparent neglect of the duties of the toilet will charm the countess, by the delicate insinuation it will convey, that you consider her among your intimate and privileged friends."

"Be it so, then; but, at any rate, let me select the most becoming *negligé* I have." And so saying, Voltaire slipped his arms into a rich damask *robe de chambre*, embroidered with gold, the folds and adjustment of which he carefully studied before the glass; and having composed his dress and countenance to his mind, he hurried to the room where I was awaiting him. Directly he appeared, I rose and embraced him, according to the etiquette of the times.

"How, madam!" exclaimed the philosopher, feigning surprise, "do you not shrink from allowing that young and blooming cheek to come in contact with wrinkles and old age?"

"Old age," cried I; "I see nothing but the strong and healthful symptoms of an ever youthful genius."

"You would fain conceal my shrunken features with your own fresh roses; but have a care, madam, the very breath of one so near the grave is sufficient to wither them."

"Come, come," interrupted the maréchal; "I cannot suffer you to indulge these ideas, my excellent friend; do not suppose your career at all near its close.

No; like Fontenelle, you will live to number more than a century."

"Fontenelle," replied the sage, "is of a different temperament to me; his cold, icy nature may stand the storm of a hundred winters, but *I*, my good friend, have a warmth and feeling which will, ere long, wear itself out."

"No, believe me," exclaimed I, "you are framed of materials that will defy all the ravages of time and fame, and glory will unite in rendering you immortal."

"Your flattering words, madam, but confirm what I have ever asserted, that the smiles of the graces are preferable to those of the muses; but towards you I have many faults to acknowledge: how cold-hearted and ungrateful must my late silence have rendered me in your eyes."

"No, indeed," answered I; "I forgave the pique you seemed to entertain against me, because I knew it arose from the want of a more intimate acquaintance with my real character and disposition."

"Oh, my behaviour and manner might have convinced you it was a sort of lover's quarrel."

"Do you really believe, then, I had unlimited influence with the king?"

"What could any living creature have refused to those bright eyes? and had I seen you before, I should have borne you still greater ill-will, supposing that one so charming could never have asked a boon in vain."

"The maréchal will answer for all the endeavours I used to serve you," replied I.

"The late king, my dear Voltaire," replied Richelieu, "knew you too well to have much regard for you."

"And for my own part," retorted Voltaire, "if I had any love for his majesty, it was because I did not know him."

"Louis XV. was too well acquainted with the unfa-

vourable light in which you had represented him to the king of Prussia; your couplets upon himself, as well as the lines subjoined to *La Pucelle*, referring both to him and the marchioness, your irreligious pamphlets, &c. &c.; and all these things together had so far injured you in his estimation, that the utmost exertions of madame du Barri were vainly exercised in your behalf."

"Allow me to implore your pardon for my injustice towards you," exclaimed M. de Voltaire; "and believe me, I was sufficiently punished at the time by the pain it gave me to believe you inimical to my return; need I say how greatly my sorrow is increased by all I now see and hear?"

"Let us think no more of the past," cried I, gaily, "but enjoy all the happiness the future holds out, for we venture to assure ourselves you will never again quit Paris."

"Never, unless forcibly driven thence; the manner of my reception has been too agreeable for me willingly to forego so delightful an enjoyment, which would be not a little enhanced, could I but hope for the happiness of frequently seeing the valuable friends who are now my honoured visitors."

The conversation then turned upon indifferent subjects, and company being shortly after announced, I took my leave.

M. de Voltaire, led away by his love for study and the gaieties of life, fell dangerously ill very soon after the conversation I have been describing. All Paris was in commotion, and in the general fear which prevailed of losing him, the clergy thought it a fair opportunity for endeavouring to seize him as their prey. The curé of St. Sulpice on the one hand, and the abbé Gualtier, almoner of the incurables, on the other, used a thousand pious means of snatching his soul from the evil powers. I will not trouble you here with the description of these religious manœuvres, you may read the account in a hundred different works.

However, the recovery of the philosopher put an end to all further attempts to save him from the pains of the damned, and no sooner did his convalescence permit, than he returned the visits of those friends who had paid him the like attention during his illness. Unfortunately for me I was not at home when he called, and wishing to atone for my disappointment, I determined to go to him at an hour earlier than the crowd was accustomed to assemble. The porter informed my servants that his master had just stepped out to his attorney, but would very shortly return. I therefore resolved upon awaiting his leisure, more especially as I learned that a lady who had arrived previously to myself, was sitting in patient expectation of the philosopher's coming. Leaving my carriage, I ascended the staircase, and a servant opening the door of an apartment, announced "Madame la comtesse du Barri."

I entered, and a female who was sitting there instantly rose—it was the duchesse de Grammont! I must confess that this unexpected rencontre threw me into some embarrassment; but madame de Grammont, more mistress of her emotions and countenance than myself, pointed to a chair, and begged of me to be seated. I obeyed in silence, and found myself sitting opposite my most mortal enemy. My confusion would have quite prevented me from commencing a conversation, but my companion, with the utmost coolness, prevented all trouble on my part by observing,

"It has taken, you perceive, some such great event as the coming of M. de Voltaire to bring us both under one roof."

"'Tis true, madam," replied I, "that we should neither of us have sought this interview."

"I should not have avoided it, I can assure you," answered madame de Grammont; "and, upon the whole, I cannot say I am very sorry it has taken place."

"If it be only to recur to the past, our conversation is little likely to prove agreeable to either of us."

"And why so? Ours has been a deadly war, and victory has declared itself in your favour; but at least, I may boast of having gloriously defended my cause."

"If I have conquered, madam, 'twas your own violence compelled me to measure strength with you. I never wished aught to your harm or prejudice; and this avowal, which the vanity of another might hesitate to make, I offer freely and candidly."

"I will admit," replied the duchess, "that we were at first greatly mistaken in our estimate of you, and that our defeat was entirely our own fault; but how was it possible to humble ourselves by confessing to you that we were in error?"

"Do you then pardon me all the opposition I offered to your wishes?" said I.

"And how can any one be angry with you, wicked creature that you are?" said the duchess, smiling. "I know all that you would have done to serve us; but what business had you at court? it was not a fit place for one so candid and forgiving; it is a theatre for hatred and intrigue alone."

"Then, I suppose, I have at length found out the reason, why every person there opposed my presence so strenuously?"

"Do not, I conjure you, seek to laugh away my meaning; I am well satisfied with our explanation, and I would fain prove to you, now that you are no longer able to serve any one, that I can be grateful for acts of kindness, even if they spring from my enemies. The duchesse de Grammont flatters herself with possessing no ordinary soul."

The emphatic manner in which these last words were pronounced, spoiled all the heroism contained in the former part of the speech; not noticing them, however, I contented myself with replying,

"And I, madam, am happy to learn from your own mouth the opinion you entertain of me; it does me much honour, and I am truly proud of it."

"Have a care how you permit pride to spoil your

excellent nature; but since we now perfectly understand each other, do you think it advisable we should be seen together?"

"No," replied I, "such a sight would only furnish matter for the ill-natured and badly disposed, who would only fabricate an entire conversation, for which we should have the credit; one, in all probability, very different from the truth; I will, therefore, withdraw."

"It will be the first time you have given place to me," returned the duchess, smiling.

I rose, saluted madame de Grammont, and retired sufficiently well-pleased with the morning's adventure to forget my disappointment. As far as regarded M. de Voltaire, the duchess was not more fortunate than myself, for the object of our visit returned too late for her patience, and she left the house without seeing him. I returned to Luciennes, where in silence and quiet, I could determine upon the manner in which I should speak of my late rencontre; indeed, so singular and improbable did every fact relating to it appear, that I feared the relation of so unlikely a tale would only be considered as an attempt to impose on the credulity of my hearers; and, besides, how could I answer for it that madame de Grammont's account might agree with what I should say? Might she venture to use the same candour with the world she had employed when we sat alone and unobserved in the house of Voltaire? Many were the chances against such a supposition, and I therefore resolved to be silent for the present, and not to mention the affair until she herself had first set me the example.

This was the wisest plan I could have followed, and I subsequently congratulated myself for having adhered to it, when day after day passed on without any person's appearing to have heard of my late interview with my bitterest foe. Even the baron de Sugère appeared entirely ignorant of it; he who visited every nook and corner of Paris, and was a constant guest in every fashionable scene, must have heard the least

whisperings of such a circumstance, and would infallibly have flown post-haste to report anything of a severe or ill-natured description in which my name might have occurred. Nearly a fortnight afterwards I said to the maréchale de Mirepoix,

"Do you frequently meet madame de Grammont now?"

"For the last fortnight I have been continually encountering her. The day before yesterday we dined together at the house of my brother, and last night we supped with madame du Deffant."

"Has she spoken of me lately with increased or diminished animosity?"

"I really think that for the last two years I have never heard her pronounce your name until the day before yesterday, at the prince de Beauvau's, when she put the very same question you are now asking."

"What did she say?"

"She asked me if you talked much of her? and said, she supposed you did not spare her. I answered, that you were none of those vindictive persons who never forget an old offence."

"'And to the amiable forbearance you speak of,' exclaimed she, 'may be added the qualities of prudence and discretion, both of which are preeminently possessed by the comtesse du Barri.'

"I looked at her, supposing she spoke sarcastically, but no, I assure you, she was quite serious. She must have changed her opinion very materially with regard to you."

"I am delighted to hear it," cried I; "indeed, she has no further cause for offence against me; and now that all pique or party feeling is at an end, the duchess resumes the natural elevation of her character."

"Why, my dear countess, are you praising your late rival? Surely you have some wager on the subject."

Spite of all her astonishment, the maréchale could by no means divine the true state of the case, which made me more than ever rejoice in the path I had

chosen. I easily perceived that the duchess, who had been moved by my unexpected appearance to an involuntary movement of generosity, would have been much annoyed had I made any boast or parade of what passed between us; it might have given her an air of thoughtlessness and indecision by no means desirable, which, in order to free herself from, she might even have deemed it necessary to deny altogether. My brother-in-law, to whom I related all that had passed, entirely concurred with my sentiments and proceedings.

'Tis time I returned to M. de Voltaire, but his house was now beset even to suffocation; a crowd of philosophers continually assembled there, and kept away such poor, unpretending persons as myself; I therefore did not again visit him after my meeting with madame de Grammont. Still, the news of his death gave me much pain, and I joined in the universal regret that this wonderful man should have been removed from that world, of which he was one of the brightest ornaments. He expired the 28th of May, 1778, in the midst of his triumphs, and just at the period when his trials were about to recommence.

The duc de Richelieu by no means deplored the man, whose mention of him, had assured him of being long in the recollection of posterity. He told me a few days after the death of M. de Voltaire, that the king had observed, just before the relapse of which the philosopher died, "This visit to the fools of Paris lasts rather too long; 'tis time this comte de Launay (a title bestowed on Voltaire from the circumstance of his having once foolishly assumed it) were back at his estate."

Monsieur replied, "He is somewhat old to undertake the journey."

"Brother," resumed Louis XVI. "if he has strength sufficient to utter fresh blasphemies every day, he has surely enough to travel a few stages; he is dangerous both to the interests of the church and state."

I asked the duc de Richelieu, whether he believed that the king would have persisted in his intentions of commanding the return of M. de Voltaire to Ferney?

"There is not the least doubt of it," replied he; "for, independently of there being no person about his majesty sufficiently interested in the matter to intercede for the prolonged stay of Voltaire in Paris, no one could be found with courage enough to make the attempt."

"Excepting yourself, monsieur le maréchal," cried I; "you, his old and acknowledged friend."

"I loved him well, certainly, but I should have preferred his letters to his conversation; the latter was soon forgotten, but the letters form a collection of no small price, and I should have been very glad to have increased their number."

Oh, men! thought I, there are many such calculators among you.

By degrees, the loud and clamorous regrets for the loss of this great man became hushed, and even his friends consigned him to silence and the grave; but many events which followed in rapid succession had their share in distracting the thoughts of those who grieved.

One thing, simple as it seemed to me, became the universal theme of all connected with the court, and that was the increasing favour of madame de Polignac, whose influence with the queen seemed to gain fresh strength each succeeding day; her friends and *protégés* were immediately adopted by Marie Antoinette, who left all things to her command and control. M. de Maurepas in particular distinguished himself by the open and undisguised manner in which he expressed his sentiments on the subject. The establishment for the young princess Elizabeth was being formed about this time, and a lady of honour was found for her equally infantine as herself. The comtesse Diane de Polignac, who certainly needed some careful person to take charge of herself, was appointed to this high

office. When the nomination was made public, a thousand voices rose in disapprobation of it, but the baron de Sugère, with his usual causticity, remarked, "Now I think the choice a very wise one, for it is calculated to keep up in the mind of the young princess a constant taste for playing with dolls!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Death of Jean Jacques Rousseau—Court gamesters—Accouchement of Marie Antoinette—Cardinal de Rohan—A royal baptism.

THE death of Voltaire was followed by that of another equally celebrated philosopher—Jean Jacques Rousseau, who expired on the 3d of July, 1778, at the château d'Ermonville. A variety of rumours were afloat as to the real cause of his death, some asserting that he had been struck by apoplexy, while others declared he had shot himself. This last account is in all probability the most correct, and the cast taken of his features after his death bears undeniable proofs of his having died by violent means. This highly-gifted man had passed his whole life in abusing mankind, and in endeavours to provoke their dislike and disapprobation; one would have supposed that the very name of glory or fame was repugnant to him, from the strong efforts he made to escape either. Still, I am more inclined to ascribe his misanthropy to calculation than a natural bias.

Paradoxical in his conduct as in his writings, he would, without any pretext, quarrel with his best friends only that he might, by so doing, excite a large portion of public attention. And he in whose language so much display of sensibility is to be found,

gave more than one proof of a cold and unfeeling heart. He called himself open and candid, while he was perpetually breaking some tie or promise in the civil relations of life.

What then was the secret charm by which he gained so largely on our interest and attention? In the first place, the very wildness and caprice of his style excited our curiosity, and next the heart was softened to admiration by the seductive language in which he portrays love in our sex; to this did Rousseau first owe his reputation, and the philosophers had confirmed our decree upon his merits, ere he had declared himself against that body. But this opposition had the effect, after a time, of stirring up a violent quarrel between Rousseau and our modern sages, who returned the *Geneva bear* (as they termed him) insult for insult, while the women forgave him all his faults and failings in consideration of his *Nouvelle Héloïse.*

One of the great misfortunes of Rousseau was being poor, while his rival Voltaire was enabled to keep up his château with the air and comfort of a prince. The former was a more touching and affecting character, the latter a more splendid and imposing one. Voltaire, all wit and vanity, indulged in sarcastic raillery against his fellow-men, while Rousseau, a compound of pride and passion, vented himself in groans or execrations. The one resembled Democritus in a court suit, and the other might not unaptly be compared to Heraclitus, or rather Diogenes, in his tattered mantle.

I regretted much having seen so little of Rousseau; I might easily have been much in his company since my return to Luciennes, but I must confess that I had thought very little about him till too late.

With the news of his tragical death I learned that the triumphs which had been heaped upon Voltaire had greatly irritated Jean Jacques, whose ambition aspired to having statues erected to his memory.

Perhaps, indeed, he well-deserved them, but no person appeared to be of his opinion.

His wretched wife, so contemptible during his life, completed her degradation by marrying a servant. This was a sort of scandal and reproach to philosophy; the *zelanti* groaned over it, and the profane made it a jest. I had the misfortune to laugh at it, and this being reported to the d'Alembert cabal, placed me under their interdict. This I heard through the baron de Sugère, who feigned to disbelieve the existence of a God in order to establish for himself the reputation of an *esprit fait*, while his superstitious practices daily gave the lie to such an assumption.

The prince de Soubise, who was too great a nobleman, and too much engrossed with the ladies of the theatre, to care in the least for literature, heard with equal indifference of the deaths of Voltaire and Rousseau.

I took an opportunity one day, when the conversation fell on the subject, to let him know my sentiments.

"Why, to speak the truth," replied he, "I am no reader, it wearies me; and besides, since these men of genius neither visit the demoiselles Verrière, nor frequent the house of mademoiselle Guimard, where, for heaven's sake, should I meet with them? or how should I interest myself for them? Each morning my anteroom is filled with the most delightful poets, quite equal to the two gentlemen you are blaming me for not deploring more, I have not the least doubt."

"For mercy's sake, my lord, think a little ere you mention a parcel of obscure authors in the same breath with the two bright lights of the age; the two greatest geniuses of our time."

"There may certainly be a slight difference between them, but whether it be a little more or a little less what care I. Those I allude to amuse me for the time, and when I am weary, I can get rid of them without any ceremony, whilst one is obliged to observe

an almost respectful manner towards the two poets in question. I am, on this point, quite of the same opinion as the duc de Duras, who, speaking upon the subject, observed, "It really is surprising how any man, who has never even treated an opera-dancer to a glass of water, should have been able to create so great a sensation in the world.' "

However the public, who by no means partook of the indifference of M. de Soubise, were now busily engaged in ascertaining the existence of the manuscript containing the memoirs of J. J. Rousseau. This remarkable work began to be generally known about this period, and every one knows the absorbing interest it excited. The lovers of scandal trusted that in its pages would be found many sharp and piquant revelations, while the philosophers dreaded least Rousseau might have employed them for the purpose of unveiling their manœuvres and exposing their intrigues, and accordingly they set every engine to work in order to possess themselves of what they styled a book of vengeance.

I have been credibly informed that an immense sum was collected and appropriated to the purchase of the original manuscript in order to destroy it in the presence of witnesses, but the purpose was laid aside from the understanding that two copies existed, although placed in the keeping of different persons. The proposed expenditure would, of course, have been fruitless, and the money was accordingly paid back to those who had contributed it, while the intended purchasers contented themselves with decrying the publication ere it had appeared. The work has since been printed, and you, my dear friend, who have seen it, can answer for the irresistible charm its author has flung over the most common-place details, as well as the enthusiasm with which it was received.

The discovery of these memoirs, and the news of the naval victory of Oussaint, gained by admiral d'Orvillieres over the English, were the two principal

themes of conversation throughout Paris. The glory of the action was, at the onset, attributed to the duc de Chartres, who had taken part in it. This prince, who aspired to the office of high-admiral, had, by way of rendering himself worthy of it, encountered the dangers of a sea-fight, and wonders were related by his partizans of his valour and bravery, all of which, at first, met with a ready belief.

Upon the duke's return to Paris his reception was so flattering and the general enthusiasm was carried so far, as to excite considerable jealousy in a powerful quarter, and in the fear of the duke's monopolizing all glory to himself, other pretenders were started to it, and orders given to diminish his merit in the affair.

Public malignity flew to the aid of private envy, and soon converted the conquering hero into a mere boaster and braggart, while the triumphal songs were changed into satirical couplets. I must confess that the line of conduct observed towards the duc de Chartres was the first occasion of all that has since taken place. He found it impossible to endure the malevolent attack made upon his honour, springing as it did from so well known a source. Who could then have predicted his playing the important part he now performs?

About this time the queen, who had passed several years without any indication of leaving a successor to the throne, was declared in a state of pregnancy. This great event was a death-blow to the ambitious views of the comte d'Artois, and destroyed all the hopes entertained by monsieur of succeeding his brother upon the throne.

The credit and power of Marie Antoinette was not a little augmented by the auspicious circumstance alluded to; but unfortunately, her restriction from more active recreations, introduced a fatal love of cards, and never was this destructive passion carried to so formidable an excess. The court was a veritable den of thieves, where pockets were stripped, and for-

tunes swallowed up, and where cheating and dishonest practices were as common as at the lowest gambling-house; it was, indeed, dreadful to perceive both lords and ladies of the first families in the kingdom degrading themselves by the meanest tricks and deception at cards. The thing happened so frequently and openly as to be past all denial; every precaution was obliged to be taken to compel fair play, for it had become a common thing with the ladies of court, when seated around the card-table, to affirm or deny having played according as the game seemed favourable to them; and, on more than one occasion, the queen was under the necessity of calling aloud to the bankers,

"Gentlemen, you are being cheated!"

"Your majesty is right," they would reply, "but we had not perceived it."

And who were these bankers? One of them, M. de Chalabre, the son of a well-known gamester, possessed that equivocal reputation which induces men, when they see another rich, to inquire how he became so? He was known to be bold and daring, and a first-rate player, with a peculiar readiness and expertness in profiting by every chance; in a word, he was generally received, but nowhere liked.

His assistant, monsieur Poinçot, chevalier of St. Louis, was neither enabled by merit or birth to make a figure at court, nor did the laws of etiquette permit him to take his seat at the card-table in presence of the queen, who, however, at the entreaty of the other bankers, waved the form, and permitted Poinçot to take a seat. This was a severe blow to all those who held the ancient regulations in high estimation. The indignation of the duc de Richelieu reached such a pitch as to draw down upon him a severe reproof from Marie Antoinette, who had, no doubt, heard of the maréchal's complaint at her having thus laid aside all established rules. Accordingly, the first time he appeared in her presence, she exclaimed, with much hauteur and offended pride, "My lord, I make no

remark upon the many scandalous and unbecoming actions you daily commit; have the goodness, therefore, to observe a respectful silence upon all I shall think proper to do."

These words stung the haughty marshal to the quick, and he showed his keen sense of them to the last moments of his life by ranging himself on the side of the queen's enemies. Meanwhile, the rage for gambling continued with undiminished fury, and enormous sums were lost. M. Necker could not, at length, refrain from speaking to the king on the subject, explaining, at the same time, the ruinous state in which it would involve the finances. Louis XVI. heard him, and replied,

"'Tis merely the fancy of a female under the queen's circumstances, and will cease after her delivery."

"Then the delivery of her majesty will be that of the nation's also," replied the minister.

The freedom of this reply by no means suited the humour of the king, who, however, refrained from noticing it at the time; but when he subsequently had the indiscretion to repeat it to Marie Antoinette, it completed her dislike for M. Necker.

The court was now one vast gulf of ruinous play, where money, jewels, and estates were alike staked and sold, to the injury of those who had just claims upon them. Married and single alike shared the general furor, and Paris looked on with horror upon the amusements of Versailles, which, unhappily, continued in full force after the recovery of the queen from her accouchement.

In the month of December, 1778, she gave birth to a princess, whose sex was no small disappointment both to the king and queen, who had flattered themselves with an heir to the throne. However, after the first burst of regret, the court began to console itself with the idea that the arrival of the little princess might very possibly be followed in due time by a prince, who would confirm the pleasing hopes excited

by the symptoms her majesty had evinced of perpetuating her line. The infant was placed under the care of madame de Guemenée, governess to the children of France, upon the dismissal of madame de Marsan; the queen would much more readily have bestowed this important charge upon the princesse de Polignac, but her good-will availed her nothing, it being impossible to deprive the house of Rohan of it, and it required all the follies of the prince of that name, as well as the indiscreet conduct of the princesse de Guemenée, to bring about a change so ardently desired.

The year 1779 was ushered in by an event which set all the princes of the blood in commotion. Prince Louis de Rohan, grand almoner, earnestly desired to add to his other dignities the title of cardinal. This he could not hope to obtain from France while he remained an object of so much dislike and displeasure to the queen. His friends, therefore, sought the favour from the king of Poland, who yielding to their wishes, the profligate prince Louis at length arrived at the summit of his wishes, and covered his weak brains with a cardinal's hat; but the insatiate vanity of the Rohans, while they paraded their exalted relative about in his scarlet robes, and showed him thus adorned in all company, good or bad, did not forget to have his name inserted in the *Almanach Royal* of the present year, preceded by the three initials, S. A. E., signifying, *Son Altesse Eminentissime*. This was a high-sounding title enough, but one which required some little strength to keep.

There are no princes, properly so called, in France; that title being but a simple distinction, a courteous qualification, giving of itself neither rank nor privilege; the only real princes are the members of the reigning family, whatever may be their degrees of relationship, consequently, they alone in public acts assume the title of *altesse*, of which they are very tenacious, and strongly oppose any attempts on the part of the unqualified to possess themselves of it. The family of

Bouillon and de Rohan, who, without having the smallest title have always *princed* themselves in their private authority, have ever aspired to add to that title the significant and comprehensive addition of *altesse;* but not being at liberty to gratify the breathings of their ambition in any public or legal act, have ostentatiously insisted upon receiving it from all their dependents, flatterers, servants, petitioners, and hangers on. You will easily perceive by what I have said, that the bold assumption of this envied title could not be very complacently looked upon by the princes of the blood, who, assembled at the house of the duc d'Orleans, requested him to bear their complaints on the subject to the king. His majesty, not less indignant than themselves, openly reprimanded the presumption of the Rohans, and desired that a contradiction should appear in all the yet unsold copies of the *Almanach Royal* of the title so vainly adopted by the cardinal. Poor prince Louis felt this measure the overthrow of all his ambitious projects, and hung his head in bitter mortification at being thus compelled to resign his newly gained honours.

When I saw the cardinal a short time after, I carefully avoided all reference to so unpleasant a subject; but prince Louis's head was too full of one subject, and he immediately led to it by deploring the inflexible hatred with which the queen pursued him. "She hates me," said he, "as much as she loves madame de Polignac, and that is saying a good deal."

I sought to dissuade him from this idea. "No, no," cried he, "I am but too sure of what I say. I know she detests me, and I have yet one fresh attempt to make to mollify her feelings towards me; should that fail, then I have no resource but to wage open war and return her hostility."

I thought of these fatal words long afterwards, and I think, when I come to relate the famous affair of the necklace, you will be able to understand their meaning.

I saw clearly that the cardinal, exasperated by his

disappointment, would give himself up to counsels that might render him indeed a dangerous enemy, and I have not been deceived.

The christening of the young princess took place at this period, and drew forth a most singular question from monsieur, who stood godfather in the name of the king of Spain. The baron de Sugère brought me the account of the ceremony, adding, with his usual malice,

"Do you know, countess, that monsieur has proved himself quite a proficient in the church ritual, for yesterday at the baptism of madame, where he attended as sponsor, in the name of his most catholic majesty, the grand almoner, who, by virtue of his office, read the service, having inquired of him by what name the infant should be baptized, monsieur, instead of replying to the question, said, 'My lord cardinal, you forget the proper commencement of the ceremony; the first thing is to ascertain who are the father and mother of the child presented for baptism, the ritual should teach you this better than I can do.' The grand almoner, confused by so unexpected a remark, was at first rather embarrassed, but quickly recovering himself, he replied, that assuredly such a demand as dictated by the ritual was necessary when the officiating priest was not acquainted with the parents of the child, but that, in the present case, no such difficulty existed, as every person, as well as himself, knew perfectly well that madame was the offspring of the king and queen. Here the dispute might reasonably have ended, but monsieur appeared to find particular delight in continuing it. He then said, turning to the curé of Nôtre Dame, whose duty called him to make one in the sacred ceremony,

"'Am I wrong, monsieur l'abbé, in what I say? You perform this office much more frequently than my lord cardinal here, and can, consequently, better compreheud the importance of the thing.'

"'I agree,' replied the curé, 'that in a general

view your royal highness is correct, but I must say that, in a similar case, I should have acted as his eminence has done.' "

This reply, which made all the spectators smile, was by no means to the satisfaction of his royal highness, who muttered something between his teeth that was scarcely audible. However, the baptism proceeded, and the infant was duly registered by the names of Marie Thérèse Charlotte.

The pertinacity of monsieur excited considerable surprise throughout the château, and I, who perhaps more readily than others divined the true reason of such conduct, congratulated myself more than ever upon the reserve with which I had conducted myself during my interview with him.

CHAPTER XV.

The two invalids—The king and Marie Antoinette—Unpopularity of the Polignacs—The measles—Triumph of madame de Polignac—The antique inscription—The niece of Voltaire—The duc de Richelieu announces his marriage with madame de Rothe.

Madame de Forcalquier had been some time without calling on me, and I learned with much regret that she was confined, by severe indisposition, to her chamber. I hastened to her, and with all the warmth and gratitude of my disposition, sought, by the tenderest cares, to repay the kindness she had formerly evinced towards me.

My devotion was, however, interrupted by my taking the complaint with which my friend was suffering, and I was removed to my own house, where, for several days, I continued in great danger; nor do I believe I

should ever have risen from my bed but for the excellent nursing and kind solicitude of my beloved Geneviève, who never quitted me for one instant. She was indeed an invaluable friend, and from her death, which happened too soon for my comfort, I date the long list of calamities with which I have been successively afflicted; but of this distressing event I will speak in the proper time and place.

My numerous acquaintances were also constant in their attendance during the period of my indisposition, and both the male and female part seemed to vie with each other in bestowing on me every possible mark of regard.

Among the most zealous were the duc de Cossé and madame d'Aiguillon, whose invariable kindness and steady friendship stood the test of time and change, proving most satisfactorily that the philosophic age in which we lived, had been unable to chill the energies of her noble nature.

One day, when I was unusually low and dejected, the duchess, by way of amusing me, said,

"Really, the *bonhomie* of the king is admirable; he tells his courtiers every word that passes between himself and his august spouse. Yesterday he informed them that the queen having recovered from her confinement, it was his intention to go and thank her for having made him a parent; and that her majesty was sanguine in her hopes of adding to the obligation, by giving a dauphin to France ere long.

"It is, indeed singular," said I, "that in a nation where women exercise such influence over the mind of the other sex, females should be excluded the throne."

"And in the power of direct succession are they alone debarred from power, for both before and since the reign of Louis XIII., see what unlimited control our sex have exercised; look at the regency of Mary de Medicis and Anne of Austria during the long minority of Louis XIV.; look at the ascendency possessed by my great aunt, the duchesse d'Aiguillon, over the

cardinal de Richelieu; then consider madame de Maintenon and her successor, the marquise de Maintenon. The regent Philip had no less than ten favourite female advisers. His late majesty furnished abundant examples of the sovereign power we women can exercise even over a monarch; for instance, there were mesdames de Chateauroux, de Pompadour, and yourself."

"Yes," replied I, laughing, "cotillon 1, cotillon 2, and cotillon 3; but it is now the reign of legitimate sultanas, and our present queen possesses, as she well deserves, unbounded power over the heart of the king."

I repeated this conversation to comte Jean, who replied,

"Ah, sister, 'tis scarcely worth while now to talk of what you might have been, but the duchess is right. The Salic law does not exclude a pretty woman from governing and ruling with arbitrary sway over the mind of the proudest sovereign that ever sat upon a throne, and had you but listened to me directly the term of your exile had expired, you should have set out in my company to see whether Europe did not contain another throne on which you might have sat as firmly and agreeably as on that of Louis XV."

"I thank you," returned I; "but at Luciennes I am tranquil and happy, while away from Paris existence would be a burden to me, even though an actual diadem encircled my brow."

"Still," said comte Jean, "you cannot deny the charms of power."

"Indeed, I am by no means insensible of its dazzling merits, but I am not ambitious, and I can with truth assure you, my good brother-in-law, that I am perfectly contented to remain as I am."

Although comte Jean was far from believing in these professions of disinterestedness, he yet abstained from pressing me further on the subject, and contented himself with borrowing money from time to time he never thought of repaying, but which I lent him as much from a feeling of gratitude for his

past concern for me as to be freed from his importunities. When I was convalescent I returned into the fashionable world, and one of my first excursions was to see the royal procession pass to Nôtre Dame, where the queen was going to return thanks for her recovery from child-birth. The city of Paris was desirous of making a public rejoicing, and giving a splendid fête upon the occasion, the expenses of which they were willing to bear, and one act of their munificence was the portioning twelve young girls who were married by the archbishop in the presence of her majesty.

The royal pair, preceded by the princes of the blood, arrived, attended by a detachment of the *gardes du corps*, a few private guards and officers, and followed by about eight-and-twenty carriages. The queen had been flattered with the hope of an enthusiastic welcome, but, on the contrary, a heavy silence, broken only by a few distant murmurs of complaint and disapprobation, greeted her from the moment she appeared in sight, until the return of the cortège. This evident proof of unpopularity gave visible pain to Marie Antoinette, whose kind heart deeply felt the dislike thus manifested by her subjects, for whom she entertained the sincerest affection. The king, whose plain manner of speaking was proverbial, exclaimed, turning to his captain of the guards,

"Why are the people so silent? What is the matter with them? I do not understand their conduct."

The person so addressed sought to evade a direct reply, but the queen, joining in the conversation, exclaimed with vehemence,

"Behold, sire, the fruits of the unfair and unjust manner in which those about us are pleased to misrepresent our actions, while we are the innocent victims of their slanders."

"Let them say all they know for the love of heaven," answered the king. "I act in every instance with

the best intention, and my subjects ought to give me full credit for so doing."

Such, alas, is the unfortunate destiny of kings who are known to their people only through the medium of their courtiers. The dinner, which followed the occurrence, took place upon the return of the party to La Muette. Gaiety seemed banished, for king, princes, and courtiers alike foreboded a coming storm.

Madame de Polignac, who dreaded lest her enemies should avail themselves of the present opportunity to ruin her in the queen's estimation, sought more than ever to separate her royal mistress from the rest of her court.

I have before now told you, that one great cause of complaint against me during my day of power, was my inducing Louis XV. to withdraw himself so much from his nobility, and a considerable outcry was raised at my engrossing so much of his time and attention to myself. The fact was, the late king was naturally inclined to melancholy, and shunned all noisy and crowded assemblies with the same eagerness he courted solitude. The queen, on the other hand, was never so happy as when surrounded by balls, fêtes, and parties of pleasure; it was doing violence to her wishes to reduce her to a confined circle of acquaintances, however agreeable might be the personages of whom it was composed. Madame de Polignac viewed each new friend selected by her majesty with a jealous eye; and although the close surveillance with which she surrounded the queen excited some disapprobation, yet respect for her royal mistress imposed silence upon almost all. And what was the result of all this? Why, that the queen, kept in the dark as she was, could not even suspect the real state of things, and the breaking out of the revolution was to her a complete thunderclap.

About this period an event occurred which fixed the credit of madame de Polignac more firmly than

ever at court, and for some time silenced the clamours of her enemies. The countess was seized with the measles, which was quickly communicated from her to the queen. The friends were necessarily obliged to be separated. Madame de Polignac was removed to Clayes, while the queen remained at Versailles; and all those interested in the matter anxiously trusted that time and change, aided by the absence of madame de Polignac, would produce their usual effect in the mind of Marie Antoinette. The princesse de Lamballe began to pay her court with renewed assiduity, while the princesse de Guemenée, the comtesse de Dillon, and many others were equally industrious in building castles in the air.

The queen aided all these cabals by seldom speaking of her friend, whom she seemed, indeed, utterly to have forgotten. Meanwhile, the complaint took its accustomed course, and the royal patient was declared to be in a state of convalescence; this important event accomplished, madame de Polignac, eager to resume her confidential post, wrote to the queen a letter expressive of her duty, and saying, that she hoped to be well enough to pay her court to her majesty on the following Monday. To this intimation her majesty returned the following reply, sent by her own private page, " You must yield to me in anxiety for our next meeting, which I am determined shall take place on *Sunday* next, when I purpose dining with you at Paris."

What a triumph! and how completely did it annihilate the hopes of those who had anticipated the downfal of madame de Polignac. The queen kept her word, and set out for Paris attended by her ordinary suite, and the princesse de Chimay, her lady of honour; but on arriving at the countess's hotel in the Rue de Bourbon she dismissed her equipage, and requested madame de Chimay to return home, as she intended dining *tête-à-tête* with madame de Polignac. This was accordingly done. Her majesty remained

with her friend, while the comte Jules de Polignac gave a large entertainment to the principal officers and ladies of the court, besides several noblemen invited, no doubt, for the express purpose of witnessing this excess of royal favour.

Like many others, M. de Maurepas saw all these proceedings with serious dislike and dread, but in common with the general prudence observed, he carefully repressed every appearance of dissatisfaction; although he well foresaw, that ere long this newly established family would take the lead in the royal mind. The queen had already dispensed with asking his advice upon any matter, while by the king he was still occasionally consulted. Any other than himself, seeing his declining credit, would have acted wisely by withdrawing from court, but the poor old minister could not so easily persuade himself to part with his idol, and determined to dispute his place manfully with those who seemed to him like so many hungry heirs, waiting the moment of his death to possess themselves of his honours.

In order to destroy the credit of the Polignacs with the king, it was necessary, as a preparatory step, to destroy their influence with the queen; but how was this to be accomplished? Already had some slight inuendoes ushered in the commencement of his plan, when one morning that he was engaged with the king the queen entered the apartment apparently angry and disturbed, to complain to her royal spouse of certain pamphlets which had appeared against the Polignacs without the police having deemed them of sufficient consequence to trace out the authors of them. "The attachment which binds me to the comtesse Jules de Polignac," continued Marie Antoinette, "should be sacred at court, and I hesitate not to declare open enmity with any person who shall seek to injure her either in the estimation of his majesty or myself, should that person even be, what is utterly impossible, the comte de Maurepas himself."

The minister trembled at these words, so declaratory of the queen's clear-sighted view of his own sentiments, as well as her resolution of defending madame de Polignac from all attacks of her enemies. He therefore affected to smile at the observation of Marie Antoinette, while he inwardly determined to profit by the caution it contained, and from this moment he abstained from all open expressions of discontent, contenting himself with whispering his sentiments among his friends. All this I heard from the duchesse d'Aiguillon, between whom and the comte de Maurepas a warm friendship existed, which was not a little strengthened by the warm support afforded by the latter to the project entertained by the d'Aiguillons of marrying their only son to mademoiselle de Polignac; a measure much more easily resolved upon than carried into execution, on account of the strong antipathy entertained by the queen against my poor friend's family, and she positively refused to grant her permission for its taking place.

This was a *coup de grace* to the proud heart of the duc d'Aiguillon, who survived it but a very short time. Do you not now perceive, my friend, some explanation of the violence with which the young duc d'Aiguillon has entered into the cabals formed against the court?

Madame d'Aiguillon saw with much pain the overthrow of her hopes for the advancement of her son, who, in espousing mademoiselle de Polignac, would have obtained the right of succeeding the duc de Villeroy in the post he then occupied, as captain of the guards; a splendid post, and the envy of all the nobility. All attempts to vanquish the repugnance of the queen to the match were in vain, and she persisted with determined hatred to refuse all overtures on the part of the d'Aiguillons.

Mademoiselle de Polignac shortly after this espoused the comte de Grammont, who was created duc de Guiche upon the occasion, with the reversion of the post held by M. de Villeroi. The king bestowed on

him an annuity of 30,000 francs, and, willing to please the queen in all things, he presented the bride with a dowry of equal value.

The immense sums engrossed by the Polignacs at this time, might well rouse the indignation of the public; they possessed, either in public offices, private pensions, or landed property, more than 1,600,000 livres per annum, and still more, were accustomed to have debts to the amount of 5000 livres paid annually from the royal treasury.

This marriage was like throwing a second apple of discord into the midst of the court; for, in the first place, the numerous friends and relations of the d'Aiguillons vowed vengeance against all who had counselled the queen to reject their kinsman as a suitable husband for mademoiselle de Polignac; and secondly the post so much desired of captain of the guards, had been promised by Louis XV. to the duc de Lorges, and the engagement, although not formally attested, had been made with the entire knowledge and concurrence of the present monarch. The duchesse de Civrac, mother to M. de Lorges, claimed the king's promise with a vehemence which threatened destruction to all who opposed it; while the Polignacs, whose usurpation of another's right was but too evident, fearing lest this duchess, who was lady of honour to madame Victoire, and whose husband was gentleman in waiting, might seek to interest that princess in their cause, prevailed on the queen to oppose an effectual bar to their so doing. For this purpose Marie Antoinette repaired to her aunt, whom she apprized of the mark of distinction she was desirous of bestowing upon the son-in-law of the comte de Polignac, at the same time expressing the severe displeasure with which she should view any attempt made to overthrow her decision on the subject. This determination, expressed with all the lofty energy which characterised the queen, made madame Victoire lay aside all intentions of interfering in favour of the Civracs. This

manner of evading the performance of a royal promise gave great offence at court, and was no small injury to the queen, whose enemies refused to admit the share the ambitious Polignacs had had in effecting it, although those who wished well to her majesty allowed that her own heart was too good ever to have suggested such a mode of proceeding.

I forgot to tell you in the proper place that M. de Vergennes had been nominated by Louis XVI. minister of foreign affairs upon the dismissal of the duc d'Aiguillon. M. de Vergennes was a man of sense, honour, and probity, sincerely attached to France and the reigning government, less brilliant but far more solid than the duc de Choiseul; he had, by turns, represented his sovereign at Manheim, Trèves, Constantinople, and Stockholm, and each time had distinguished himself by the clearness of his understanding, his consummate skill, and wonderful aptitude in all that regarded his mission; but even beyond these qualifications was he loved and valued for his undeviating integrity and strict honour as a diplomatist. An object of universal regard at the different courts he visited, he continued, without ever making an enemy, to withdraw himself from the most difficult and contrary situations, and rendered the most signal services to his country; his merit must indeed have been somewhat uncommon to have been able to resist the secret jealousy of the comte de Maurepas, and the declared hatred of the partisans of the duc de Choiseul; the former envied him the success of his undertakings, while the latter hated him for the unbounded confidence reposed in him by the king.

From many channels I learned that his enemies were busily at work to lead him into the commission of some error, of which they would instantly take advantage. Provided with the most exact details on the subject, I longed to put this excellent man on his guard, but who could I ask to aid me in the affair? I equally mistrusted the friends of the duc d'Aiguillon,

the Choiseul party, and the sycophants who hung upon the steps of M. de Maurepas, nor had I any very great confidence in the maréchale de Mirepoix. In this uncertainty, and hoping to render a service to the king by preserving his minister from all malicious intrigues, I determined to address M. de Vergennes myself, and therefore wrote as if to solicit his interest for a young relation of the Du Barri's, who was anxious to enter upon a diplomatic career, and begged he would grant me an interview at any hour most convenient to himself.

At an early hour on the following day a respectable looking person drove up to Luciennes in a plain, hired carriage, and requested to speak with me. I had not yet risen, and my people, recollecting how nearly I had once become a victim to my want of caution in receiving strangers, seldom disturbed me for any unknown persons, who, if not dangerous, might be merely some importunate pleaders for either my money or interest; they were about to dismiss my visitor somewhat abruptly, when one of my footmen, whose mistress was the sister of M. de Vergenne's coachman, recognised the minister under his incognito; he was, however, sufficiently prudent to keep his discovery to himself, at the same time he assured Geneviève with so much earnestness that I should be happy to receive the person he brought to her for admission, that she determined, at last, to learn my pleasure ere he was sent away.

"A gentleman is asking to see you, madam," said she, entering my apartment, "but I cannot tell you his name; all I am able to learn is from Saint Jean, who affirms that you will be pleased to see him."

"Admit him, then," said I.

Geneviève obeyed, and to my inexpressible astonishment, ushered in the comte de Vergennes. I begged my noble visitor's pardon for receiving him with so little ceremony, and in my bed-chamber; but with the most easy and graceful manner he thanked me for not

having treated him as a stranger, and added, that he had come to Luciennes in order to spare me the necessity of going to Versailles, a place which, as he obligingly observed, must recall many bitter recollections to me.

I thanked him for his considerate attention, and then reverting but slightly to the ostensible cause of my letter, I proceeded to point out to him all the dangers by which he was surrounded. After having listened to me in profound silence, he replied, "I thank you, madam, from my heart for the kind interest you take in my behalf; I was already aware that my enemies were busily employed in laying snares for me, but I trust, through your valuable assistance, to avoid their evil designs; and further, to be capable of distinguishing friends from foes?"

After an hour's agreeable conversation relative to the late king, M. de Vergennes quitted me, apparently well satisfied with his visit, leaving me delighted at having secured so valuable a friend. I preserved an entire secrecy upon the subject, and secured the silence of Saint Jean by a present of four louis.

My recommendation of my young relation was promptly attended to, and a letter from M. de Vergennes soon acquainted me that my protégé was installed in the desired office. For this I wrote to thank him, and from that period to his death I had never cause to complain of his want of zeal wherever he could serve me.

I removed from Luciennes to Paris for a short time, for I had now been long freed from any restraint upon my actions, and I went regularly every year to pass some of the summer months with the poor duc d'Aiguillon, whose health visibly declined. During my stay in Paris I mixed in the best society, saw a constant round of pleasure, and weeks passed away like minutes.

About this period a most amusing incident occurred, founded upon a little mistake made by the Academy

of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres. During some excavations going on in the lime quarries of Bellevue, a stone was discovered bearing several Roman characters of no apparent connection one with the other. This wonderful inscription was much talked of, and the members of the academy assembled to deliberate upon the affair. The result of their meeting was an order to their secretary, M. Dupuy, to write to his majesty, requesting his gracious permission to place the antique stone at the disposal of the academicians; this being granted, the necessary orders were forwarded to the churchwardens and parish authorities, by virtue of which the precious block was carefully removed from its resting-place, and conveyed, at a vast expense, to the Louvre, where the learned members of the academy received it with all due honour. A committee was immediately formed, consisting of M. de la Curne de Sainte Palaye, the abbé Barthélemy, Dupuy, de Breginquy, Auquetel, and Keralio, who laboured with the most unremitting zeal to discover the meaning of this singular inscription, but without success, each person finding a separate key to the enigma, and expounding it after his own fashion. In achieving the solution of the characters, which all concurred in pronouncing merely initials, the academy applied to the comte de Gébelin, author of *Le Monde Primitif*, and famous for his skill in ancient languages. The disposal of these mysterious letters was as follows, and their singular arrangement not a little contributed to increase the difficulty of the erudite philosophers I have named.

I C
I
L
E
C H
E M
I. N
D. . E
S. A. N. E. S.

The very interpretations of this wonderful stone were sufficiently obscure to need a second explanation, and the committee durst not venture to give in the proposed signification to the academy from a fear of provoking the ridicule of the numerous literati and antiquaries, both French and of other nations, assembled in eager expectation of the event.

While the solution of this wonder excited the attention of all Paris, the mystic characters were copied upon hand-screens, chimney-ornaments, and every article in which it was possible to introduce them, and whole evenings were spent in endeavours to find out this all-defying secret. During the fever of curiosity, and when science was beginning to hang her head in confessed inability to solve the riddle, the beadle of the parish of Montmartre, chancing to hear talk of an affair which formed the sole engrossing subject at Paris, came in all haste to the academy with a request to be heard on the matter of the inscription, the true meaning of which he affirmed he could furnish. His vanity and ignorance were rewarded with a loud and deriding laugh from the learned body he addressed. Nevertheless, tired of his importunity, these sapient literati deigned to admit him within their sacred walls, when he thus addressed them :—" Gentlemen, I am but a beadle, and perhaps an ignorant fellow besides ; but I have to state that near the spot where this stone was found, and in the same quarry, it was formerly the custom to sell out the lime to persons who brought asses laden with panniers to carry it away ; now as those who conducted these animals did not always know the precise road they should take to reach the limepits, a stonecutter engraved the one you have before you according to his own fancy, as a sort of guide. You may perceive that beginning with the first letter, and reading straight down, its signification is as follows, *Ici le chemin des ânes.*"

Only conceive, my dear friend, the confusion of the academicians, and the unextinguishable mirth of the

public when informed of the discovery brought about by this modern Daniel. It kept us in continual laughter for nearly a fortnight, and for almost twice that period the wise heads which had been so long puzzled with this block, were compelled to hide themselves. The comte de Maurepas suggested that instead of destroying this asinine monument it should be converted into a guide for the academicians on their road to the hall of inscriptions and belles lettres.

Three singular marriages took place about this period; one was that of the widow of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who, as I told you, took for her second husband a footman belonging to M. de Girasin. The union of madame Denis, the beloved niece of M. de Voltaire, with a M. Duvivier, who had been a soldier and a clerk, from which he rose to be secretary to the comte de Maillebois, who procured him the appointment of commissary of war. This madame Denis was a thorough simpleton, wholly unworthy of the elevated station in which the glory of her late uncle had placed her. She was, indeed, a mere common-place woman, loquacious without any pretension to wit, and pedantic without even the excuse of moderate talents. Her ridiculous marriage ruined her for ever in the eyes of the world, and by degrees her former friends dropped off and abandoned her to her well-merited obscurity, nor can I tell you whether she is at this moment alive or dead.

The maréchal de Richelieu had been confined to his chamber by severe illness, and not having seen anything of him for a long time, I was much surprised one day to see him suddenly enter my salon. I uttered an involuntary cry at his appearance.

"For heaven's sake, my lord duke," exclaimed I, "from whence came you?"

"From my bed, madam," replied he, "where I have passed so tedious a time that I have resolved no longer to have it all to myself."

"My dear maréchal!" cried I.

"And why not?" continued the duke; "surely I am not so very antediluvian as to make the thing incredible, or if I be so very aged, all I can say is, I am not conscious of it myself, and the only difference I feel is, that having lived a few years longer than some of my fellow-creatures I look upon the circumstance as permitting me to use a freer liberty of speech. And then there is my impudent varlet of a son; but I will punish the young coxcomb for daring to sign his father's death warrant, and giving me over as incurable; I'll clip his wings, I'll cut down his inheritance."

"But how?" said I.

"My dear countess, I am almost ashamed to tell you that I am about to take another wife; you will, no doubt, join in the general laugh against me, but you will neither act wisely nor kindly in so doing."

"Nay, my lord, you judge me wrongfully; I am far from blaming your forming a second union. You require a kind and affectionate companion, who will render to you those gentle and soothing attentions no hireling will bestow; besides, the fair object of your choice is still young, nobly descended, beautiful, rich, and amiable, how then can you fail being happy with her?"

"Then I perceive my marriage is no secret to you."

"It has been known to me ever since —— this morning."

"And who told you?"

"Ah, there is a secret."

"I have found it out, though, madam. The duc de Fronsac was with you to-day; the audacious stripling, to dare to turn his father into jest; but he shall repent it, for I'll—I'll—by heavens, madam, I will give him a score of brothers."

"But that would be visiting his offences somewhat too severely."

"I have frightened my young gentleman not a little, I promise you; for I have assured him that, in the event of my having children by my new marriage, he

should enter the church; what say you to my project?"

"I heartily approve of it."

"I am happy to hear you say so, I fear all Paris will not treat me so liberally."

He then broke out into eulogiums upon his intended spouse, of whom he seemed tolerably enamoured. Madame de Rothe was the widow of an Irish gentleman, who left her much better supplied with children than that ever needful commodity, money. She possessed a tolerable share of personal attractions, with a more than usual portion of wit and good sense, and principles of the highest order. M. de Richelieu had been hovering around her for some time, but his attentions were wholly unnoticed until he spoke out fairly and honourably, then at the talismanic word marriage the widow's icy heart was thawed, and she yielded her hand to the ardent solicitations of her somewhat aged lover, and most happily did the connection prove for both parties; the duke was indebted to madame de Rothe for the happiness of his latter days; while she reflected honour and credit on his name by her excellent conduct, which has been equally irreproachable since his death, a tribute of praise which all who know her will cheerfully join in. The maréchal quitted me enchanted at the sentiments I expressed, and delighted, as he said, to have been so fortunate as to obtain my approbation.

It was, indeed, from the duc de Fronsac that I had learned this last act of extravagance on the part of his father. The threat of the maréchal was realized, the duchesse de Richelieu became pregnant, but a few months destroyed all her hopes, and de Fronsac still remains the only child of his father.

CHAPTER XVI.

Magnetism—Amusements at court—Birth of prince Jules de Polignac —Cagliastro—A scene of mystery.

These somewhat singular marriages would, in all probability, have continued to furnish food for the gossips of Paris much longer, had not public attention been rivetted upon the doctrines of a German professor, named Mesmer, who, about this period, brought the newly-discovered science of magnetism with him into France. His lectures were attended by crowded audiences, and while some went away with the impression of his being something superior to this world who could unfold such wonders, many departed with the conviction, that if he were endowed with supernatural powers, he derived them from Lucifer himself. You must well remember the universal rage he excited, and to what a pitch of enthusiasm his votaries carried their adoration, and, if I mistake not, you were one of the initiated; pray allow me to inquire, what that secret cost you? for well I know the doctor revealed not the grand arcana for nothing.

The lively imagination of madame de Forcalquier eagerly caught at the wild tenets preached by Mesmer, and she exerted herself so successfully over my mind as to induce me to become one of his disciples, and I went to the trouble of having a magnetic apparatus set up at Luciennes, which quickly brought a train of Mesmerians around me. I should tell you that the initiatory fee demanded by the doctor for the explanation of the workings of the machine was a hundred louis, and it did somewhat stagger my faith to find one, who professed to have no other intention than to serve humanity, demand so large a premium from his fol-

lowers; however, enthusiasm easily reconciles the most seeming contradictions, and the passion for magnetism swept away all attempts to measure its proceedings by the dictates of reason.

The fêtes were not less splendid at Versailles this year than the preceding one; on the contrary, luxury and extravagance seemed each day to tax their powers to invent fresh delights and refinements. In the midst of all this splendour, the passion for gaming continued in its fullest force; fortune and character seemed daily staked and lost over the destructive dice. Among the greatest losers was the comte d'Artois, whose strict honour in discharging these debts of honour reduced him to the greatest difficulties, and rendered him the continual dupe of designing persons, whose singular good fortune might have rendered a more suspicious person disposed to see something like good management as well as good luck in their uninterrupted success. Never had gallantry so free a scope, for when the fair gamesters were bankrupts in purse, they found their smiles frequently accepted in lieu of pecuniary payment. But I must pause, or my present letter would be swelled to a size that would more than tax your patience; besides, events press, and I would fain call your attention to the close of Lent, 1780.

You remember the famous sermon preached from that awful denunciation, "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." I believe you were present, as well as myself, at its delivery, and can answer for the deep and solemn impression it produced; but Paris, although equal to the devoted city in pride and impiety, was not yet moved to a more than temporary feeling of repentance; indeed, the unconcern with which the higher classes trampled upon every outward observance of religion, was calculated to produce the most fatal effects on those who, naturally enough, took their tone from their superiors. The following incident will tend to prove the truth of the assertion.

On Ash-Wednesday, 1780, the prince de Lambesc,

his brother, and the princess de Vandemont, were returning from the country in a carriage drawn by six horses, when they overtook a procession, composed of priests carrying extreme unction to a dying man. The postilion, from a natural impulse of religious veneration, pulled up his horses, but the coachman flogging his violently, compelled him to move forward in so rapid a manner, that an attendant priest was flung down and trampled under the horses' feet, to the great amusement of the young noblemen in the carriage. The enraged multitude, however, were not disposed to take the same view of things, but pursued the vehicle with stones, mud, and the bitterest imprecations. Nor is it probable that they would have escaped with their lives, had not the terrified drivers urged the animals they drove to their utmost speed, and so escaped the storm. The wounded priest being raised from the ground, was carried to his convent, and placed under the care of a surgeon, who pronounced his recovery extremely doubtful. The brotherhood of saint Paul, to which he belonged, instantly made a report to the archbishop of the enormous sacrilege committed; this latter contented himself with writing to the comtesse de Brienne, who, fearing the consequences of so flagrant an offence, gave orders for the dismissal of the coachman, and, hastening to the convent, bought off the offender from further punishment by settling on the wounded man an annuity of 200 livres, and an assurance of her fortune, favour, and protection; and thus ended an affair, which, under the reign of Louis XV., would have been visited with the severest rigour of the law aided by the royal displeasure, which would, in all probability, have banished from the kingdom the prince de Lambesc and his sacrilegious companion. But alas! his excellent and pious grandson was already beginning to feel himself a king in nothing but the name.

About this time a party of young men, nearly all military officers, formed themselves into a kind of

club; among them were Messrs. de Chabannes, de Chabrillant, de Louvois, de Champcenity, de Tilly, de Soyecour, de Cossé, de Dillon, de Polignac, de Vaucheuil, de Thiars, de Noailles, &c., &c., for the purpose of getting up plays and joining in various recreations. The mirth and spirit of these meetings were quickly noised abroad, and excited in the mind of Marie Antoinette a lively desire to share in a species of pleasure partaken of by the most correct females at court. This inclination on the part of the queen somewhat awed and alarmed the members of this little community, and by every respectful argument they sought to dissuade her majesty from mingling in their gaieties, but in vain; she had formed her resolution, and declared that if she was not expressly invited she would break in upon them by surprise. This hint was sufficient, and the whole party took care to learn the evening on which the royal visit was to be made, as well as to be duly prepared.

On the night in question, the assembly was held at the house of the duchesse de Villequier, when the arrival of her majesty put an end to a concert, to which all were listening with delighted attention. The queen, who loved something of a novel and more entertaining description, honestly avowed her indifference to so insipid an amusement. Eager to gratify their illustrious guest, they began playing the novel game called *descampativos*, which, as I suppose you know, was played by persons so completely enveloped in a large white mantle or drapery as to disguise both face and figure, while one among them, seated in the centre of the room, held a handkerchief which was touched in turn by all the others, who used a thousand tricks and pantomimic gestures to divert the sitting person from guessing their right name; the game ended by the discovery of one of the party, who was then required to take the chair in the middle of the room, while he who had formerly occupied it rose and joined the rest of the party.

The novelty of this sport amused the queen excessively, and the party was still further strengthened by the arrival of the king, madame, the comte and comtesse d'Artois, and the duc and duchesse de Chartres. A select number of these amateur actors next performed a parody upon a popular play, after which, at the queen's desire, they renewed the *descampativos*, in which the king, princes, and princesses joined, and the happy party did not break up till four o'clock in the morning.

Etiquette must ever be deemed one of the greatest hinderances to pleasure, and it may be compared in the case of royalty to the holiday-suit of some country gentleman, which, when laid aside, identifies him with his fellow-men; but when resumed, commands the rustic bows and obsequious respect of all admiring spectators.

The French nation, ever accustomed to the most rigid observance of etiquette, could imagine neither virtue nor majesty without it; and censured the youthful gaiety and easy affability of its young and lovely queen, and frowned at her innocent enjoyment of pleasures so natural at her time of life. Alas! these strictures came equally loud and severe from those more immediately about the person of Marie Antoinette, and that very nobility who now accuse the people of undervaluing their excellent queen, were the first to pave the way for the frightful scenes we now daily see enacted. For my own part, I shudder to behold those leagued against our beloved princess, whom a grateful recollection of former favours should have bound to her in adamantine chains.

This year was marked by the birth of a son to the comtesse de Polignac. At the first indication of the pains of childbirth the queen hastened to her friend, and further proved her solicitude by establishing herself at La Muette, in order that she might, at all times, be enabled to satisfy her anxiety respecting the invalid,

The infant, ushered into the world under such brilliant auspices, received the name of Jules Auguste Armand Marie, and his splendid destiny seemed secured when the comte d'Artois volunteered to stand his sponsor. The title of hereditary duke was bestowed upon the husband of madame de Polignac, and it was intended to have created him a peer had not circumstances of a contrary nature interfered with the completion of the design.

I will now revert a little to myself, and inform you that my admiration of magnetism had given place to a still more abstruse science. I was one day descanting upon the wondrous tenets of doctor Mesmer, when the cardinal de Rohan, who was present, and apparently much amused at the enthusiastic manner in which I spoke, said, with a mysterious air,

"Do you know I can procure you the knowledge of far more surprising things than any you have been relating to me. I am acquainted with a personage able to afford you a view into those unknown regions where man, in his present state, has never penetrated."

"I should be glad to see such marvels," returned I, "were I not a terrible coward; and, of course, what you propose can only be accomplished by the aid of witchcraft."

The cardinal smiled.

"But how comes it," inquired I, "that you, a priest, should join in any intercourse with the devil?"

"Why such things do happen sometimes, I must confess; but be easy, my dear countess," cried the cardinal, with fresh gaiety, "for, believe me, we have no dealings with his Satanic majesty. Our invisible friends are mere elementary genii, those ethereal substances with which the universe is filled; those aërial beings, who form, as it were, a chain of division between man and the divinity—sylphs, salamanders, and undines. The person who can bring you acquainted with these mysteries is the comte de Cagliastro. What say you? are you willing to make trial of his art?"

"I am all curiosity; pray bring him to me at your earliest convenience."

Accordingly, a very few days afterwards, the cardinal de Rohan conducted to my house a man of about forty years of age, or, perhaps, he might have been much older, for his physiognomy had an indescribable something in it which baffled conjecture. He was handsome, although slightly wrinkled, and his large, full eyes sparkled with an intelligence at once penetrating and malicious. He was dressed with more magnificence than taste, and on his fingers, and at the collar of his shirt, he wore some superb diamonds; his hands were further decorated with several antique gems and cameos, a number of which were also appended to his watch-chain; he carried a walking-stick, the head of which was surmounted with a profusion of the finest emeralds, and ruffles of the most costly lace completed his dress. He spoke French with an Italian accent, which he seemed in no trouble to conceal. The cardinal presented him to me by the name of the comte de Cagliastro, a nobleman travelling for his pleasure; "and to assist the cause of humanity," interrupted the individual himself, with much simplicity, either real or affected. To me he seemed to have the air of a mere itinerant mountebank, and his style of conversation, although good in itself, was emphatic but not natural; he seemed to deal out his words in the obscure and sententious form of one imagining himself perfectly oracular; it was necessary, upon all occasions, to admit whatever he advanced, for the least attempt at argument closed his lips in utter silence. I had seen sufficient of the world to form a tolerably correct estimate of this man, who seemed to have gained so completely on the credulity of prince Louis; but, knowing how vain it would be to attempt to stem the tide of favour which at present supported him, I received him with much politeness, and, after a few prefatory compliments, the count inquired, whether the cardinal

had rightly informed him that I was anxious to look into futurity, as, if so, he was ready and willing to gratify my wishes. I assured him of my ardent desire to peruse the book of fate.

"Are you quite sure," asked Cagliastro, "that you have courage to look behind the dread curtain which divides the present, past, and future?"

"Indeed," replied I, "I am not famous for courage, and only pray of you not to expose me to any needless alarm."

"For whatever you may see," answered the count, "you must not hold me responsible. I am utterly ignorant of what this mirror will present before your eyes, nor can I ever know unless you are pleased to tell me." So saying, he drew from a small pocket in the right breast of his coat a metallic glass in an ebony case, ornamented with a variety of magical characters in gold and silver. "If you do indeed desire to read the things futurity has in store for you," said Cagliastro, presenting me with the glass, "open this case, and carefully examine the polished surface of the mirror it contains, it will show you the most important and solemn act of your whole life; but, ere you once allow your eye to dwell upon it, consider well how far you have courage and resolution to bear whatever may strike your gaze; and be assured, that let its face reflect you either propitious scenes or otherwise, not one circumstance can fail of being duly and fully accomplished."

These words, pronounced in a deep and solemn tone, made me hesitate ere I received the magic mirror, but curiosity, which has ever been woman's besetting sin since the days of Eve, triumphed, and I resolved to persevere. The count, perceiving my determination, began pronouncing some barbarous words, utterly strange and foreign to my ear. He then begged the cardinal to repeat the apostles' creed, which the prince (not without much hesitation) did. Cagliastro then

suddenly opened the box, and taking out the mirror, laid it before me; I cast my eyes eagerly upon it —— but the sight was too horrible for mortal vision. I uttered a loud scream, and fell fainting in the arms of prince Louis.

CHAPTER XVII.

A visit to Bagatelle—The queen takes a part in the private theatricals —Misunderstandings between the various members of the royal family—A new version of the same tale—Fête at Brunay—Justine —A letter to the duchesse de Grammont—Her reply—Interview in the convent of Jacobites, Rue St. Honoré.

In vain, my friend, will you look for an explanation of the horrible and mysterious scene which terminated my last letter. Never could I bring myself to reveal the appalling vision which met my gaze; and now, that so many years have elapsed since the affair, I have brought myself to consider it as merely an optical delusion played off by the comte de Cagliastro in revenge for some unintentional offence it appears I had given him. Still there are times when the frightful recollection rises before me, and fills me with the most thrilling dread.

When I recovered the use of my senses I found myself extended on a couch, surrounded by my attendants, while Geneviève and Henriette, in great alarm at my sudden illness, were sprinkling me with powerful restoratives. At length I opened my eyes, but it was only to relapse into repeated faintings, nor could I be for some time persuaded that Cagliastro was not still standing by me with his horrid mirror in his hand. The cardinal de Rohan, who was eagerly awaiting the

information of my recovery, no sooner learned that I was more composed, than he sent an earnest request to be permitted to see me. "Let him come," cried I, "but let it be unaccompanied by his hateful companion." Count Louis entered, and with many expressions of regret for the distress I had suffered endeavoured to draw from me some explanation of the cause of my alarm. On this head I was resolutely silent; my tongue would have refused utterance to such a disclosure, and I begged I might be spared all importunity on the subject. The cardinal assured me of the extreme sorrow felt by Cagliastro, who, as he said, was in utter ignorance of what had been visible to my eye upon the surface of the magic mirror, it not being permitted him to know either before or afterwards what it had represented. From the natural and unaffected manner in which prince Louis spoke, I could not doubt his sincere belief in the truth of what he asserted; I therefore contented myself with saying that I accepted the justification, but, in consideration of the shock my nerves had sustained, I must beg to be excused from seeing the comte de Cagliastro again, and, satisfied with this half concession, the cardinal took his leave. However, my mind had been too violently agitated speedily to resume its composure, and for a fortnight a violent fever confined me to my apartment. At length I regained my health and cheerfulness, and my convalescence brought around me a numerous circle of kind friends, all eager, in some way or other, to relieve the tedium of my confinement at home. The tender solicitude of the duc de Cossé soon perceived that change of scene and object would be more likely than any other means to divert the melancholy abstraction which occasionally stole over me, and with this view he proposed an excursion to Bagatelle. You are aware, my friend, that this terrestrial paradise arose from a wager between Marie Antoinette and the comte d'Artois, the former of whom undertook (under penalty of 100,000 livres) to build

the pavilion of Bagatelle, and entirely furnish it in the course of a month. Her majesty was, however, disappointed in her expectations, and compelled to pay forfeit. As yet, this fairy abode had scarcely been profaned by the gaze of curiosity, and great interest was necessary to obtain permission to visit it; two days after the duke had invited me to accompany him thither, we started at an early hour from Paris (where I then was) in a splendid carriage and six. The approach to Bagatelle is through a wild and apparently uncultivated plantation; masses of rock and granite rudely piled together, conspire to give an air of wildness and sterility to the scene, which is, in fact, a mere contrivance to heighten the effect of the smiling beauties which afterwards break in full luxuriance upon the sight. The road serpentines through a narrow and somewhat difficult passage cut out of the solid rock, interspersed with immense trunks of trees, overgrown with clustering ivy and underwood. At the end of this barren approach the château is descried, on the principal door of which is a fanciful device, surmounted by the words, *Parva sed apta*, and, standing in a circle before the entrance, are placed the statues of Silence, Mystery, Folly, Night, Pleasure, and Reason; how or why the latter found admission there I cannot tell.

I gazed with admiration at the *coup-d'œil* which presented itself, and bestowed an equal share of praise upon the choice of materials, and the judicious manner in which they had been employed. Everything connected with the edifice proved the existence of the most refined taste, and abundantly showed that magnificence alone had not presided over its construction. It was, in fact, a sort of architectural miniature, of such beauty as to suggest the idea of its being precisely what, in the days of heathenish superstitions, any one might have supposed a god would have selected for his abode whenever he had chosen to assume the mortal, and visit this terrestrial sphere. The ground-

floor consisted of a narrow vestibule, from which opened a dining-room, salon, boudoir, and billiard-room. The boudoir particularly charmed me; the decorations were most elegant; the fittings up were of pink and silver, while immense mirrors, fixed in the walls, reflected each form and object; in a recess stood a bed, the very aspect of which invited repose, while the sides and ceiling of this tasteful apartment were ornamented with some of the finest specimens of art; from the windows the finest points of view presented themselves, and after a long glance over the smiling scenery, the eye rested on the bridge of Neuilly, which terminated the vista. I inquired for the staircase, and was shown a steep and narrow flight of steps placed in a corner as if in shame at its own insignificancy; it was, in fact, merely a sort of model for a larger one, although formed of fine mahogany, carved with the most airy lightness; it seemed as though suspended in the air, and supporting each stair by such delicate cobweb-work, as to appear fit only to be pressed by the feet of fairies; two persons could not ascend it at the same time, and a gentleman escorting a lady could only follow her, without having the opportunity of offering his arm. Such a state of things was wholly incompatible with the gallantry and politeness practised in the reign of Louis XIV., any more than during the life of the late king.

This staircase conducted to the sleeping-rooms, beautiful from their apparent simplicity; that destined for the master of this lovely mansion particularly attracted my admiration; it represented a military tent, supported by weapons and warlike emblems picturesquely grouped; these were surmounted by casques and helmets, so arranged as to form a kind of capital to these novel pillars. The chimney-piece was supported by cannon reared on end, the stoves were constructed of a heap of cannon-balls and grenades, and the frame for holding the wood represented hunting-horns; in a word, everything in the chamber was cal-

culated to nourish a martial spirit, and to make the prince who should occupy it more than ever solicitous to rival the glory of his august predecessors. How would Henry IV. have loved to dream there of fresh victories and new laurels to be gained—how would he have tasted of happiness in this sweet spot in the arms of his fair Gabrielle.

The offices and rooms under ground received light from a sort of grating contrived in the steps leading to the vestibule which surrounded the pavilion; the garden, although small, was tastefully laid out, and admirably accorded with the lightness and elegance of the building to which it belonged. Still, I would not have exchanged Bagatelle with all its costliness and rare beauty for Luciennes; the former seemed to me, spite of its splendour, by no means deserving to be the residence of a powerful monarch; nor were its diminutive proportions calculated to impress on the mind of the beholder any great or vast idea of the state and majesty of him who inhabited it.

In the midst of the delight I experienced from the view of this singular and lovely place, a thousand fears tormented me, lest I might be surprised by some of the court, which was then at La Muette. I therefore hastened to terminate my visit, to the great regret of my companion, who, charmed at having my society so entirely to himself, would fain have prolonged our stay.

I could now speak of Bagatelle, although curiosity was on the rack to discover by what means I had been enabled to gain admittance there. A few days after my return I was much amused with the baron de Sugère, who called on me, saying,

"Ah, madame la comtesse, I have heard of your delightful excursion to Bagatelle; you are, indeed, one of fortune's favourite children; good luck seems for ever to attend your footsteps."

"What is the auspicious event you allude to?" asked I; "I shall really be delighted to know."

"Nay, madam, why conceal what is so honourable

to yourself? besides, I know all about it; in the first place, you wrote a note to his royal highness, requesting he would grant you permission to view the château, to which he replied, that he should himself do the honours of it to you. Accordingly, he received you at the door, assisted you from your carriage, and conducted you over the building with the most gracious politeness; then, as you were about to enter the garden the queen accidentally arrived; you wished to avoid her, but the prince prevented you. Her majesty approached, and you, falling at her feet, thanked her for all her goodness, to which she replied, 'Rise, madam, the past is forgotten, and I trust the future will present more agreeable sources of recollection.'"

This coinage of the good people of Paris had evidently been received with entire credence by the baron, and while I inwardly smiled at his folly in believing it, I could not bring myself to contradict a report so flattering to myself. I therefore eluded a direct reply, which, by confirming the tale in the eyes of my worthy friend, increased the natural malevolence of his disposition which could ill endure the thoughts of good to another; however, stifling his envy as well as he could, he said, with an awkward attempt at producing a smile,

"This, madam, is what I call good fortune, and, upon the strength of these facts, I predict that your influence under the present reign will equal your power during the past."

"And does that grieve you, my dear friend?"

"Oh, by no means; but such good luck is so very, very rare—to be a favourite with the grandfather and the grandaughter almost exceeds possibility."

"Perhaps you think it would be better to try what could be done to secure the favour of the grandson."

"Ah, madam, you are resistless, exercise your power on whom you may."

M. de Sugère bowed and retired as he said this, wearing on his countenance that look of anger and

malice he generally assumed when half-suspecting his ill-nature was seen and returned. I did not see him again at Luciennes for some time, and I cannot say his absence gave me the least concern.

Prince Louis de Rohan, who blamed himself for having been accessary to my late illness, had been indefatigable in his attentions during my indisposition, and when he found me completely recovered, he ventured to speak to me of Cagliastro, who, he said, had quitted Paris, and he besought of me to grant my friendship and patronage to a man who was, he said, justly dear to him.

"Prince," returned I, "I conjure you not to mention that hateful name before me."

"What did he show you, then, that has so entirely set your mind against him?"

I turned pale at this question.

"Cease, I beseech you," cried I, "if you would not see me reduced to the same state in which the vile arts of this Cagliastro threw me."

"I most sincerely regret the turn things have taken, but, rely upon it, comte de Cagliastro was not to blame; he is a most skilful man, learned as a magi, and my obligations to him will be inconceivably great."

"How so?"

"He has engaged to effect a reconciliation between myself and the queen."

"He but flatters you."

"Nay, he has pledged his word to do so."

"That will, indeed, be a miracle."

"Nothing is too difficult for the powers with whom he holds communion."

I did not reply, for I perceived with pain how much weakness was interwoven with the very nature of prince Louis; and I carefully abstained from driving him to extremities, by repeating what I had learned from madame de Mirepoix. That lady informed me that the queen, in presence of the prince de Beauvau, had given way to a violent fit of displeasure

against the cardinal de Rohan, whose determined presumption and audacity in continually fixing his eyes upon her, had so wearied her majesty that she declared her intention, if he did not conduct himself better, to have him taken by the shoulders and forcibly expelled the court. The good maréchale in relating this to me was very probably commissioned to excite me to repeat it to the prince; but as I had no inclination for such a commission, I contented myself with coolly replying,

"That his eminence would not feel particularly obliged to whoever should spread this tale abroad, and that I did not believe him capable of doing anything to the annoyance of another."

"Why, my dear soul," cried madame de Mirepoix, "you surely forget of whom you are speaking; a Rohan was never known to exercise common sense more than once in his life, and then it must be quite a chance shot. Believe me, the cardinal is capable of any absurdity."

The maréchale spoke the truth unconsciously, but her quick eye and ever ready wit made her generally tolerably correct in her estimate of persons and things. A few days after this madame de Mirepoix again paid me a visit.

"Well," cried I, "your old friend madame du Deffant is dead."

"Ah, yes," replied the maréchale, "I am sorry to say she is; indeed, I am much inconvenienced by the circumstance, for, as I was accustomed to spend one evening in the week at her house, I have now my Wednesdays completely thrown upon my hands."

"That must be a heavy grief, indeed," answered I, "and one in which I very sincerely sympathize."

I know not in what fashion the maréchale might have proclaimed the funeral oration of her deceased friend elsewhere, but this was all the allusion I heard her make to the circumstance. This lady, whose fine talents were in a manner nullified by the great proportions of egotism and illnature she possessed, had

all her life been merely playing a part. She assembled at her house the best society of Paris, and foreigners of the first distinction sought for the honour of her acquaintance. She had at first espoused the philosophical side of the question, but her quarrel with mademoiselle de Lespinasse had, in a measure, detached her from it; involved in a quarrel with d'Alembert, and for ever exposed to the severe rebuke of Voltaire, she waged war against them from motives of personal animosity, although professing alike their opinions and atheism. I could not regret her, and her most intimate friends scarcely shed a tear at her loss; she had been a mere creature of form and habit, and those who were most accustomed to her society soon ceased to remember or regret her.

Perhaps in no part of the globe is scandal more eagerly welcomed than at Paris; it is there loved for itself alone, and the delight felt in repeating a scandalous fact is wholly independent of any feeling of like or dislike towards those who are the actors in it. This is not, however, the case when it relates to any of the leading characters at court, and public curiosity was particularly on the stretch to learn the exact particulars regarding the queen's recent taste for private theatricals at Petit Trianon, where, in further violation of the rules of etiquette, she always selected the parts of waiting-maids, soubrettes, &c.; and it not a little surprised every person to see her majesty not satisfied with becoming an actress, but actually choosing to appear wearing the dress of servitude belonging to the characters she was pleased to assume. Mesdames Jules and Diane de Polignac were also enlisted into the *corps dramatique.* The actors were the comte d'Artois, Messrs. de Dillon, de Reyenval, de Coigny, de Vaucheuil, d'Adhemer, and a few other select personages. Dagincourt and Dugayon were chosen to instruct these courtly Roscius's in their new vocation; but few persons were admitted, and, at first, the audience consisted only of the different members of the royal family,

and a few persons of the household placed quite at the extremity of the apartment in which the theatre was erected. At one of these representations, and just at the moment when the queen had concluded a little song, a loud hiss was heard; her majesty, fully sensible of there being but one person in the company who would presume to venture such a mark of disapprobation, advanced to the front of the theatre, and, addressing the king, said, with a low courtesy, "Sir, if my performance does not meet with your approbation, have the kindness to retire, you will have your money returned you at the door."

This playful retort was loudly applauded, and the king, while asking pardon for his offence, protested that he had committed it merely for the sake of mischief, and by no means from ill-nature. However, it was universally admitted that Marie Antoinette's acting fell far below mediocrity, and might well have justified the disapproval of her consort. The royal corps were soon weary of playing to so scanty an audience, and longed for a few admiring friends to witness their exertions. Accordingly, a select number of courtiers was admitted, to the extreme envy and jealousy of such as were excluded. One of the malecontents said, in my hearing, "Her majesty seems over fond of playing comedy; perhaps, ere long, she will favour us with a tragedy." I cannot pretend to explain with what feelings this remark was made; but certain it was that he who uttered it has since appeared foremost among the queen's enemies, and eagerly embraced every opportunity of adding to her sorrows.

By some chance her majesty happened to learn something of the general disapprobation entertained of her appearing in private theatricals, and it occurred to her that possibly the action might be less odious could she induce any other member of the royal family to imitate her example. She therefore sought to gain madame, wife of monsieur, over to her side. A coolness had lately existed between these two princesses,

which her majesty was now the first to break through by soliciting her sister-in-law to join the private plays, and to take a part in the next they should perform. This was readily promised by madame, who possessed an excessive fondness for pleasure and amusement; however, she was not able to fulfil her engagement, for when the affair was mentioned to monsieur, he positively refused to permit it, nor could any entreaties turn him from his purpose. The queen, much displeased, remonstrated upon the severity of such a prohibition, to which he coolly replied, that his rank and situation in life did not permit his wife to become an actress.

"When I do not consider it derogatory to my dignity to do so," replied Marie Antoinette, proudly, "methinks madame might safely follow my example."

"Pardon me, your majesty is queen, and may do anything."

"I understand, madame is merely queen in expectation, and you would fain see her ascend the throne surrounded with the high homage and respect of the whole nation."

"I did not say so," answered the prince, with imperturbable calmness.

"But you thought it, my good brother, which is not much better."

Further discussion was prevented by his royal highness, who, with a low bow, quitted the apartment, and went to relate the affair among his particular friends. Malignity, however, soon furnished its own version of the story, and the following account, which I received from the marquis de Montesquieu Fezensac, confidant of monsieur, will serve as a tolerable specimen.

"Great fêtes are preparing at Brunoy to commemorate the reconciliation between the queen and madame. Two different reasons are assigned as the cause of their late disagreement, but the principal cause is supposed to have been madame's refusal to take a part in the royal theatricals. It seems that the queen, indignant

at the denial of her sister-in-law, observed, with much anger,

"'Surely, if I, who am queen of France, can partake of this amusement, you, madame, need not fear doing so likewise.'

"To which madame replied,

"'If I am not at present your majesty's equal in rank, there exists no positive obstacle to my one day becoming so.'

"Marie Antoinette finding this ground untenable, next proceeded to point out the great disparity between the descendants of the house of Savoy and that of Austria, which, as she proudly remarked, might even dare a comparison with that of Bourbon; consequently, if she, who sprung from the illustrious Marie Therèse, did not hold it derogatory to appear as an actress, there could be no reason whatever but caprice for madame's refusing to join her.

"The comte d'Artois, who chanced to be present, and who had hitherto listened in silence to the conversation, exclaimed, with a laugh, 'Really, your majesty must pardon me, if believing you were angry I did not venture to interfere in the discussion between you and madame; but now that I perceive you are but jesting I would fain share your mirth.'

"This sarcasm terminated the scene."

This witty retort on the part of the comte d'Artois will not surprise you, my friend, who know well the readiness with which he could parry the most violent or unexpected attack. Nature had indeed been bountiful towards him, and made his mental qualities fit companions for his striking personal graces. He particularly excelled in theatrical representations, and while he warmly encouraged the fine arts, he was considered the most expert of any man in France in all bodily exercises. His country is indebted to him for a large collection of celebrated works printed at his own expense. He was the liberal patron of men of genius, who were ever welcome to his house. You

have seen, as well as myself, how completely he was the idol of both court and people, and yet, at the moment in which I pen these memoirs, he has just been driven into exile. Oh, the instability of human, and especially popular favour! such are the unaccountable changes produced by revolutionary violence, changes which defy all mortal sagacity to foresee or provide against.

M. de Montesquieu, whom I saw about this time, observed to me,

"It is really grievous to see how many clouds appear to threaten the domestic horizon of our king and his illustrious consort."

"And if report does your master no injustice," replied I, "he is said not to be over anxious to heal the wounds already existing."

"Mere scandal, madam."

"Not altogether so," returned I; "an unconciliating spirit marks his every action. Why, for instance, should he have refused to permit madame to join the queen's private theatricals?"

"Because he perceives how strongly public opinion is against this species of amusement; and while he leaves her majesty at free liberty to act as she thinks proper, he fears to provoke the disapprobation of the people, or suffer his consort to do so either."

"Rather say that he is not sorry to heighten the contrast between his own grave propriety and the queen's love for pleasure."

"No person can be more jealous than my master of the royal dignity."

"Nay, my lord, you mean of those who are invested with it."

The marquis smiled, and said,

"And why should not monsieur be permitted to build castles in the air as well as another person? Is he so very far removed from the throne as to make it a crime in him to meditate upon the chances of his one day ascending it?"

"The queen may yet have sons."

"Pardon me, the chances are strongly in favour of monsieur, and for the next forty years the crown will remain, as it were, suspended over his head."

The marquis was right, and to this too seeming probability, which so deeply afflicted both the king and queen, might be attributed the prejudice with which the latter viewed everything in which monsieur was concerned.

"But all these differences will soon be reconciled," pursued M. de Montesquieu; "his royal highness wishes for nothing more sincerely than being on good terms with his family, and with this view he is going to give a splendid fête at Brunoy in honour of the queen."

A week after this conversation I saw him again.

"Well," said I, "how goes on the fête?"

"It will take place the day after to-morrow; but, I am sorry to say, we shall not have the honour of her majesty's company."

"And why not?"

"Evil-disposed persons have so worked upon her mind, and that of our gracious sovereign, that they have both refused to be present."

"I am indeed concerned to hear this," exclaimed I; "it will so fatally publish to all France the discord which exists between the royal family."

"The good sense of monsieur easily perceived this," replied M. de Montesquieu, "and immediately upon receiving the refusal of his brother he sought an interview, in which he represented the necessity of casting a veil over these family quarrels, adding, 'If, sire, neither yourself nor the queen will deign to grace our fête with your presence, neither madame nor the comtesse d'Artois shall be present; let me pray of your majesty to arrange things so that these ladies and the queen may be seen together in the same box at the opera on the evening of our entertainment, which will effectually put an end to all ill-natured surmise upon the subject of their absence from Brunoy.' The

king easily comprehended the soundness and prudence of this advice; a kind of peace was patched up between the ladies of the royal family, and our fête will take place with less splendour possibly, but certainly with more gaiety."

I learned also, about the same period, from very good authority, that a thousand manœuvres were afloat to supply the king with a mistress. Never did such an idea enter the mind of Louis XVI., whose conjugal fidelity was unquestionable, but those who mistrusted the unbounded influence the queen possessed over his mind, would fain have given her a rival. Accordingly, the absence of Marie Antoinette and her court from the fête at Brunoy seemed a favourable opportunity for presenting several candidates for favour to the notice of his majesty, (who had been induced, by the persuasions of his brother, to retract his refusal.) Among the most remarkable of these was a lady named Saint Alban, beautiful as an angel, but wicked and depraved even beyond the height to which females of her class were accustomed to carry their intrigues. This lady having been well instructed in the part she was to play, arrived at Brunoy, where she was placed so as to be most likely to attract the king's observation, while many judicious friends were skilfully grouped around for the purpose of loudly extolling her grace and beauty, and directing the king's attention to her. Louis XVI., far more bent upon watching the amusements of the evening than the beauty of madame Saint Alban, heard with indifference the eulogiums of his companions, and when, at length, importuned into a closer observation, he merely raised his eye-glass, and said, "She is certainly a fine woman, but not nearly so handsome as the queen."

Madame Saint Alban, informed of this husband-like speech, quitted Brunoy in disgust, and her failure compelled the conspirators to look around for a fresh object to captivate the king. Fortunately for their purpose, a lovely creature made her appearance about

this time at Paris; she was deemed sufficiently qualified to melt the icy heart of the king, and, accordingly, she received a visit from a nobleman, high in the favour of a certain prince, who said to her,

"Have you, mademoiselle, any objection to embark in a scheme, for which you shall receive 200,000 livres in case of a failure, while, should success attend it, the reward would be of the most dazzling nature?"

"Who that possessed the use of their senses could resist such a proposition?" said the fair object addressed; "but what am I required to do?"

"Simply to personate the sister of a smith for a month or two."

The lady smiled.

"This will not, at least, be a very difficult part to play," said she.

"Pardon me, *I* think it will; for instance, you must be a simple, modest, timid, maiden, virtuous to excess, and shocked beyond expression at the least offence against your innocence; in a word, you must play the hypocrite before a man whose honest nature suspects no one of feigning a part."

"My dear sir," replied Justine, "for 200,000 francs I would pass for a nun if necessary."

This ready assent drew forth a more complete explanation, and the demoiselle learned that it was before the king she was to enact the part of an inexperienced maiden, sister to one of the men who worked at a forge belonging to his majesty. It was not concealed from her that such an attempt would expose her to the jealousy of the queen, but ambition and interest made mademoiselle Justine ready to run all risks. The plan of action was quickly marked out, and she was introduced to her pretended brother, a Gascon, of about her own age. The new relatives were instructed in their various parts, and it was settled that Justine, under one pretext or other, should frequently call in to visit her brother while the king was superintending some article he was beating out at the forge.

The brother was further instructed to make Justine the frequent subject of conversation between himself and a fellow-workman, who was to praise her beauty and virtues, while he sighed in the style of a desponding lover who had been rejected by her, and this could easily be done in the presence of the king, as his kindness and condescension permitted the workmen to converse without any restraint during his visits to the forge. Now that Lebel could no longer furnish materials for an intrigue, you must confess that a more deeply laid one than this could scarcely have been devised; and while the unsuspecting monarch listened unconsciously to the praises bestowed on Justine, he little dreamed how he was falling into the snare so cunningly spread for him. One day, while a long discussion was going on between the Gascon and his friend respecting the charms and obduracy of Justine, a gentle tap was heard at the door. "Bless me," cried one of them, opening it, and starting back with well-feigned surprise, "here is mademoiselle Justine." At this name, which had so long been rendered familiar to his ears, Louis XVI. turned hastily round, and saw a lovely, blushing girl, who, at the sight of a stranger, courtesied timidly, and was about to retire, when her brother, catching her hand, prayed permission to retire with her for a few minutes that he might not disturb his majesty. "Stay where you are," answered the king, "and let me be no hinderance to your conversation." So saying, Louis XVI. resumed his work over a piece of iron he was busily fashioning, while Justine, having glided into a nook of the workshop, conversed in a low tone for a few minutes, when, with a modest grace, she saluted the party and disappeared. Scarcely had the door closed upon her than fresh raptures arose at her loveliness, mingled with deep regrets that she should possess so inaccessible a heart. Spite of himself, the king's attention was attracted by these praises, and when he compared them with the sweet girl to whom they related, he

could but think how far more attractive was the poor, but chaste and simple Justine to the sparkling, ambitious, and artificial females of the court.

Everything was proceeding favourably for this intrigue, and Justine had every reason to believe the king's affection half won, when, unluckily, his visits to the forge were interrupted by a journey to Marly. Mademoiselle Justine, delighted with the flattering prospects which presented themselves, could not resist the gratification of communicating to a friend her approaching greatness. The friend chosen upon this occasion was no other than Céline, between whom and myself an explanation had taken place, after the ridiculous scene my jealousy of M. de Cossé had made me perform, and from many little kindnesses I had been enabled to show her, a lively gratitude had arisen on her part. She, therefore, whilst promising Justine to keep her secret inviolable, asked permission to make an exception in favour of one dear and particular friend, on whose discretion, she said, she could confidently rely. Need I say this friend was myself? and, to my great surprise, upon awaking one morning, I found Céline seated by the side of my bed, with a face full of importance. Upon my questioning her as to the cause of this early visit, she declared I should try and guess it, and when all my attempts proved vain, she stooped towards my pillow and related what I have been telling you.

"Thank you, my dear Céline," said I, "but you have forgotten to bind me to secrecy."

"Never mind," said she, with much naïveté, "but do not trust it to more than one person."

I thanked her again for her confidence in me, and when she had retired, I determined to avail myself of her permission.

Now, thought I, is a worthy opportunity of returning the generous conduct I have received from the queen; still, I could not make up my mind how to divulge the important affair, and two days had already

slipped away. Alas, I had forgotten how many intrigues might be begun and ended at Versailles in that short time. I was roused to a sense of my folly by another visit from Céline.

"Do you know," said she, "a little thin lady, with all the air and manner of a courtly dame, a little palsied and wrinkled, and one who would speedily become the sworn friend of even a humble grisette were she elevated to the rank of favourite to his majesty? because a female of this description is a frequent visitor at the humble abode of Justine, disguised as a *femme de charge.* Justine is quite delighted with her, although she suspects her rank to be above that she at present assumes, nor does she believe her name to be madame Bertrand, as her visitor styles herself. I cannot tell who she is myself, and have therefore sought your aid to satisfy my curiosity."

I listened to Céline with a mixture of pleasure and vexation, for one person alone answered the description given, and that one was madame de Mirepoix, who could scarcely have discovered the scheme for giving a mistress to the king of France. However, I perceived that there was no time to be lost; but to whom should I trust to convey my important information to the person most concerned? All at once a bright idea darted into my brain, and I hastily wrote the following letter:—

"MADAME LA DUCHESSE,—I have need of your mediation in order to render a service of some importance to her majesty, and amid the many leading characters at court, I have selected you as the one in whose nobleness and generosity of soul I have the greatest confidence. The present affair has reference to the queen alone, and I must beg you to believe my present conduct has its origin solely in gratitude. I shall feel greatly obliged by your fixing a time and place when I can have the honour of seeing you.

"I remain, &c., &c."

The following reply was brought me the day after sending the above :—

"MADAM,—You have excited my curiosity so strongly that I cannot refuse to accept the proposed meeting; but still, in the peculiar situation in which we are mutually placed, I think we shall do right to conceal our interview from public gaze. I shall be to-morrow, at three o'clock precisely, in the church of the Jacobins, in the rue St. Honoré. Adieu, madam, believe me ever your friend,

"THE DUCHESSE DE GRAMMONT."

I see your astonishment, my friend, but it was to madame de Grammont herself I had chosen to apply. In the midst of all my enmity with this lady I had always esteemed and admired the firmness of her character; and the unshrinking courage and energy with which she had opposed me when all else yielded and bent before me, had impressed me with a high respect for her. Our interview at the house of M. de Voltaire had, in a measure, paved the way for our reconciliation, and besides, I knew no person better qualified to open the eyes of the queen, and I therefore resolved to trust her, certain of never having reason to repent so doing. I was punctual in attending the rendezvous, where I found the duchess awaiting me in one of the small chapels on the right hand; we took our seats beside each other with our faces turned towards the wall, the better to conceal ourselves from observation.

After the first exchange of compliments, madame de Grammont led to the affair which had drawn us thither, by saying, "You have an important communication to make to me, I believe."

I then related all I knew respecting Justine. At each word the duchess grew more and more attentive, fixing her penetrating eyes upon me as though she would have read my inmost soul; but the calmness and composure with which I met her gaze soon satisfied her that neither envy nor jealousy had instigated

me to the disclosure, and she soon perceived that I was more solicitous to serve the queen than desirous of injuring Justine. When I had concluded my recital she pressed my hand kindly, and said, "You excite my wonder equally with my admiration, and I most sincerely lament all I have said or done to injure you. Rely upon the gratitude of her majesty, who, I fancy, has some suspicion of the fact without having any clue to her suspicions. Should I have need of further particulars, and if you, madam, receive any fresh information, we will arrange to meet again. Adieu, rely upon my zeal and secrecy;" so saying, madame de Grammont bowed, and left the church.

Upon my returning home I found the maréchale de Mirepoix awaiting me, full of complaints at the fatigue she experienced from the numerous calls she had made.

"Then, my dear friend," said I, "you are wrong to overtax your strength by so much exercise on foot."

"On foot," exclaimed the maréchale, "what do you mean? I always ride, walking is too much for my time of life, besides, I am too idle to like it."

"Then," cried I, "some good-natured persons are willing to give you the credit of extreme diligence, for they have industriously spread a report of your being met frequently at an unusually early hour traversing the streets of Versailles, and attired with the modest simplicity of a *femme de charge*, visiting a humble dwelling belonging to some of his majesty's workpeople."

Spite of all the good maréchale's habitual self-possession, a sudden flush overspread her countenance, and she faltered out,

"'Tis somewhat strange that I cannot perform a work of charity without being exposed to observation and remark."

"Such works, for instance," cried I, "as initiating young females in the high duties attached to the situation of first favourite to the king."

"Oh, you are acquainted with the affair, I see," said madame de Mirepoix, with the utmost sang froid;

"I really did not know you still kept up a good understanding with the secret spies of the court. Does the police still continue to furnish you with the particulars of all that occurs at Versailles or elsewhere?"

"Occasionally," replied I.

"But hark ye, my dear, the present affair by no means concerns you, for surely you can have no further claim to the place vacated by you on the death of his late majesty. It would certainly have been both base and ungenerous on my part had I sought to deprive you of it whilst it was yours, but we are now in a new reign, and consequently"—

"Heaven defend me from blaming you for seeking to find a new friend," said I, furnishing the phrase I interrupted; "I am too well convinced of the reasonableness of your argument to attempt to contravene it, and I can with truth assure you, that it matters little to me whether the king takes a mistress or no, neither would your attentions to such a person give me the slightest annoyance; but my present concern and motive for touching upon the subject is to point out to you the unpleasant circumstances in which you would find yourself were the queen to discover the active part you have been taking."

"Why, there are unfavourable chances in every event, but success seems nearly certain in the present one. Imagine a creature all innocence and nature, ignorant of the ways of the world, and ready to worship a kind friend like myself, able and willing to give her every necessary instruction. Mistress of the affections of a prince who believes her to be (what I doubt not she really is) innocence itself, she must reach the very pinnacle of power, and then —— but do tell me, how did you find all this out?"

"Nay," said I, "I must first learn in what manner you became acquainted with this affair."

"Simply, by rightly employing my eyes and ears, by listening to all that is passing around me; a word, a hint, a look, is sufficient for me; I can see where

another person would hardly suspect; besides, I met the young female in question twice on a certain staircase, suspicion was aroused, and I was resolved to ascertain the accuracy of my conjectures; and now, my sweet countess, that I have gratified your curiosity, pray satisfy mine, as to how you gained your information."

"There you must excuse me," replied I, "but in return for the excellent advice you have so frequently bestowed upon me, allow me to give you a friendly hint."

"Assuredly, I promise you it shall not be thrown away."

"Then refrain from paying your usual visits to mademoiselle Justine for a few days, so that the present suspicions entertained respecting you in a certain quarter may have time to die away."

The maréchale sought to draw me into more diffuse particulars, but I wrapped myself in a veil of prudent reserve, which set all her arts at defiance. She, therefore, quitted me, somewhat vexed at my unusual firmness, yet compelled to feel grateful to me for warning her of the slippery ground on which she was standing.

Several days elapsed without my hearing anything either from madame de Grammont or the maréchale de Mirepoix, and I was beginning to grow impatient, when I received another visit from Céline, who entered my apartment with a look of ill-suppressed mirth, which yielding, ere she could speak, to an irrepressible gaiety, she burst into a fit of laughter so loud and long that in my anxiety to learn what had brought her to me, I could almost have beaten her for her merriment.

"Pardon me," said she, at length, when the fit had a little subsided, "but I really could not help it; never, surely, had love affair so singular a dénouement."

"When you are pleased to let me into the secret which so greatly amuses you," said I, "I shall be better able to give you my opinion."

"Well then," cried she, "the days of heroism have

returned, and Scipio lives again in the person of our gracious monarch; but listen, I pray you, and I will relate all I know in the very words in which Justine herself gave me the account.

"'I used to visit my brother daily, and never without meeting his majesty, who evidently beheld me with much pleasure, questioned me respecting my manner of life, my habits, and my family, each day treating me with greater kindness, and insensibly addressing me as though one of his own family. When I was well established in the workshop, my pretended lover, feigning an inability to support my indifference, quitted the spot for ever. The king perceived this, and put many questions to me to learn why I did not return the affection of my admirer? I evaded a direct reply, but with many sighs and half-averted looks endeavoured to make myself understood in vain. My royal visitor would not or did not take the hint so plainly given. On the following day I ventured to recollect, all at once, having forgotten to close the door of the humble apartments supposed to be occupied by my brother and myself, and I affected to quit the shop to repair my negligence. My good-natured brother instantly offered to go for me if his majesty would permit him; the king nodded assent. Matthieu went, and I remained alone with his majesty. I had determined to make the most of the opportunity, thinking that king's hearts were not more difficult to subdue than those of their subjects, and, accordingly, I laid direct siege to that of Louis XVI., and had it been pregnable, I must have taken it by storm. Once, indeed, I thought I had conquered, for the king was bold enough to seize my hand and had half carried it to his lips, when suddenly he let it fall, as though its touch had blistered him. In vain did I throw the most tender expression into my eyes, his reflected only the placid calm of an anchorite, and his looks of admiration were such as you would bestow upon some splendid painting or statue. Long as was the absence

of my brother, his return found us not one jot further advanced.

" ' Yesterday morning the king entered the workshop at the accustomed hour, but calm, and apparently musing on some resolve; he walked across the room once or twice with folded arms, then, suddenly stopping and addressing Matthieu, he said, ' My good friend, you have a very pretty sister, whose beauty will expose her to a thousand perils; she deserves to be snatched from such a fate and she shall be; here is an order for 24,000 livres, which I present her for a marriage portion, and here are 100 louis for yourself; return immediately both of you into your native province and live happily. I do not desire that your sister should come to thank me, and I even charge you to forbid her, in my name, making any attempts to see me again; you may now retire.'

" ' My Gascon brother,' continued Céline, (still speaking in the words of her friend,) ' came, looking like a simpleton, to relate these words to me; no doubt, they were very sublime, but I listened to them with the keenest disappointment, for what was the paltry sum I had gained to the brilliant destiny I had hoped to have secured.'

" Here," said Céline, " my poor friend terminated her recital, which I have flown impatiently to communicate to you, and I can only say, by way of comment, that it is a pity this trait of continency on the part of our amiable king cannot be generally known, it might provoke the nobility and clergy to follow his example."

I smiled at this conclusion, and telling Céline that I wished to be alone, she left me, while I seated myself at my writing-table to send these last particulars to madame de Grammont; her reply contained but these words, " All is known;" but on the same paper was traced, in another handwriting , " I thank you."

Meanwhile, the destructive passion of gambling went on with continued violence, and seemed transplanted from Versailles to Paris, where all ranks and

conditions appeared alike infected by it. Among the principal gamblers who were particularly exposed to public censure and dislike, may be cited the party by which the duc de Chartres was generally surrounded; some, perhaps, were less deserving of blame than others, but all had, by associating with persons of indifferent character, subjected themselves to the odium of sanctioning unfair play. Among these was the comte de Genlis, the marquis de Tilly, a most delightful young man, and the marquis de Fenélon, with various others whose names I cannot just now recollect. Their cupidity knew no bounds, and every advantage was considered fair; for instance,—a M. de la Haye lost one evening, at the house of the comte de Genlis, 800,000 livres, when in such a state of intoxication as to have not the slightest recollection on the following day that he even touched a card. This unprincipled action created a powerful sensation against M. de Genlis, spite of all the attempts of his friends to hush up the matter, and the duc de Chartres was compelled, spite of his personal friendship for the count, to request he would vacate the apartments he occupied in the Palais Royal as being one of the establishment. This was endeavoured to be explained as the result of some fresh internal arrangements, but the facts were too well known, and no person was deceived by this flimsy artifice.

Madame de Genlis, however, continued to enjoy the undiminished favour and regard of both the duc and duchesse de Chartres, over whom she exercised unbounded influence, to the great vexation and envy of the whole court, who gladly seized every opportunity of evincing their dislike to her; perhaps, no female was ever treated with greater severity than this celebrated lady, and it must be allowed that she not unfrequently provoked these attacks. The friends she lost one day were quickly supplied by her on the following, without the change appearing in the least to affect her usual flow of wit and gaiety. She was an

exquisite performer on the harp, and united to a strong love for the fine arts and sciences an ardent thirst for pleasure; but I must not allow my pen to dwell upon discursive subjects; my manuscript has already increased far beyond the magnitude at first intended, and I am compelled to lead you to its conclusion.

In 1781 the king presented the queen with a diamond necklace, intended by his august grandsire for a certain comtesse du Barri, of whom these pages will tell you something. This bijou was valued at 750,000 francs, and as I did not wish to purchase it on my own account, it remained, after the death of Louis XV., in the hands of the jeweller, who, not being able to dispose of it, took an opportunity of placing it in the way of the queen. Marie Antoinette, who was then pregnant of the dauphin, who died last year, was greatly struck with the necklace, and constantly expressed her eager desire to become the possessor of it. The king, informed of her wishes, sent for the trinket, which he contrived to place on the toilet of his royal consort at a moment when she was by no means expecting such an agreeable surprise. Still, some unaccountable caprice on the part of the queen made her refuse the so much coveted ornament, which ultimately became the commencement of that vile intrigue in which her majesty and prince Louis de Rohan were engaged some years afterwards.

About this period occurred the resignation of M. Necker, which took place the beginning of the year 1781. This financier was equally disliked by the queen, the comte d'Artois, and, as a matter of course, by all the Polignac party. He guarded the royal treasure as the dragon of old watched over the Hesperian fruit, and constantly apprized the king of the immense sums continually drawn for the gratification of interested and mercenary favourites; with him order and economy were virtues of the first order, while at court they were either laughed at or despised. He became the butt of general annoyance and dislike,

until, wearied out with the continual vexations to which his family was exposed, and the interruption afforded to his own comfort at Versailles, he resigned his office.

The party which had overthrown this great man had now to provide a successor, a circumstance which in their eagerness to overwhelm M. Necker, they had never once considered. It mattered little to them who was selected, so that they need not fear the same high-minded opposition they had before experienced, and the chance fell upon M. de Fleury, one of those non-entities who are occasionally pushed into office without understanding anything more of the post than leads them to commit all the mischief possible.

Public animosity was now expending itself upon the duc de Chartres, who, as proprietor of the Palais Royal, determined upon remodelling it after his own fancy, and the plan he decided upon, although conducive to his own personal advantage, was not considered by many as exactly worthy of a great prince. The projected alterations could not be carried into effect without turning a number of persons out of their houses who lived in the adjoining streets, as well as ejecting several whose residences looked into the gardens of the palace; the prince's right to do this was not only disputed, but the attempt subjected him to the blackest calumnies, which continued to assail him long after the law had confirmed his power to do with his estate as he pleased. Never was there a greater piece of injustice, and there is little doubt but the irritation felt by the duke prepared his mind for the reception of fatal impressions. Upon one occasion, when his feelings had been particularly roused, he said to me, with tears in his eyes, "I am worn out with the persevering malice of my enemies, all seem leagued against me, nor have I one friend to whom I can turn for comfort. I am aware how many satires, epigrams, and lampoons are circulated at court concerning me; for such petty annoyances I care not, let them enjoy their laugh and their jest; but to misrepresent me with

the king, and to make me the utterer of sentiments I never once conceived, is too much for endurance; nor ought they to be surprised, if, irritated and goaded, I rush on to the most violent extremities."

The duc de Chartres soon after this became, by the death of his father, duke of Orleans, and from the moment when the workmen commenced their operations in the Palais Royal he never enjoyed one happy hour. What uneasiness would he not have been spared could he but have contented himself with his ordinary revenue!

This year brought with it a source of deep distress to me. The duc d'Aiguillon was rapidly declining, and the prospect of losing so old and tried a friend gave me sincere pain; he was, however, spared for some length of time, and, I flatter myself, the kind attentions I showed him helped to smooth his latter days. The duke expired, a prey to sorrowing regret for his prolonged exile, and his own unavailing attempts to procure his recall to Paris. His letters, which I have carefully preserved, paint well the torments of disappointed ambition; he wrote as follows:—

"The example of the comte de Maurepas is some support and consolation to me, when I reflect that from an exile of two and twenty years' continuance he rose to the very summit of power. Why should not a similar revolution take place in my fate? Many are the unforeseen changes and chances which occur in a kingdom, and you may be assured I shall not let a favourable opportunity escape."

My poor friend died precisely one month after penning these lines, but litle lamented either by his wife or son, while the public seemed scarcely to recollect the very name of their late minister. In the midst of the grief this loss occasioned me, the nation resounded with joy and acclamation for the birth of a dauphin, which auspicious event seemed, for a time, to banish all party feeling and discord. Immediately upon the queen's being seized with the first pangs of childbirth

the princesse de Lamballe, acting as superintendent of the royal household, summoned the different princes of the blood according to their rank, that they might be present at her majesty's delivery. The comte d'Artois, madame, and the comtesse d'Artois, were among the first to arrive, shortly after came the prince d'Orleans and the duc de Chartres; the prince de Condé being at some little distance from Paris was unable to arrive in time, spite of the many expresses despatched to hasten his return.

Meanwhile, the keeper of the great seal, kneeling at the foot of the bed on which the queen was reclining, awaited, in that position, the moment for executing the duties of his office; while the king and princes were stationed behind a large screen, which separated them from the crowd of courtiers. The sufferings of her majesty, although very severe, were but of short duration, and all things promised a safe and speedy delivery. No sooner had the desirable event taken place than the princesse de Lamballe, having received the infant, presented it to the keeper of the seals, whose place it was to declare the sex of the new-born child. The officer gazed at the babe with an anxious and unquiet eye, then approaching the king, and kneeling before him and the princes, he announced the birth of a heir to the throne. A close observer might easily have read in the countenance of monsieur a look of disappointment and regret, which, however, he quickly repressed, while the comte d'Artois displayed a sincere pleasure, wholly removed from every selfish feeling.

The queen, however, mistaking the solemn silence which reigned around, became greatly alarmed at the idea of having again given birth to a daughter. These alarms were dissipated by the king's approaching the bed, and whispering in a tender voice, "Your majesty has now fulfilled my dearest wish, and gratified the fondest expectations of the nation, by making me the parent of a son."

The sudden joy imparted by these words was too

much for the queen, who nearly fainted; but quickly recovering her spirits, a flood of tears calmed her agitation, and she requested to see her child. The infant was brought to her, and covered with her tenderest caresses; then, summoning the princesse de Guémenée, governess to the children of France, she said, pointing to the young dauphin, "I need scarcely, madam, recommend to you this sacred deposit, so dear to all the kingdom; it cannot be in better hands, but that you may have greater leisure to watch over this precious charge, I will henceforward share with you the task of educating my daughter."

This announcement was by no means agreeable to madame de Guémenée, as it intimated, clearly enough, that the young princess would shortly be removed from her care, ostensibly to be more under her mother's eye, but, in reality, to be placed under the surveillance of the duchesse de Polignac, whom the queen would fain have appointed governess to her children; but nothing could induce the Rohans to relinquish the office. This difficulty was, in a great measure, surmounted by the present plan for withdrawing the young madame from the charge of her present governante. Prince Louis, of whom I learned all these particulars, told me further, that immense offers had been made to madame de Guémenée to relinquish her place, but nothing could tempt her so to do. Alas! could she but have foreseen the catastrophe which threatened her, she would have lent a more willing ear to an arrangement, the advantages of which would have been immense.

No words can do justice to the joy of Louis XVI. The word dauphin seemed for ever on his lips, and he took every opportunity of introducing the expression "my son;" even in matters of state importance, the auspicious event was uppermost in his mind, nor could his conversation be turned into any other channel. On the 26th of October, his majesty assisted at the celebration of the *Te Deum*, at Nôtre Dame,

whither he went in state, attended by his whole court; in the same carriage with himself was the comte d'Artois, the ducs d'Orleans and Chartres, and the prince de Condé; heralds at arms scattered money among the people up to the arrival at church, which was brilliantly illuminated, and upon this occasion the populace, emerging from the gloomy silence with which they had of late years been accustomed to receive their rulers, manifested an enthusiastic joy, which sensibly touched the king.

The page despatched to the Hotel de Ville at Paris with the news of the birth of a dauphin, received the customary present of an annuity of 10,000 livres. In a word, for more than a month, France resounded with the cry of joy and festivity.

The death of the comte de Maurepas followed a very few weeks after the happy event I have been describing; he expired on the 21st of November, at the advanced age of fourscore years, the latter part of which had been so brilliant. I will not trouble you with any retrospect of the life of this great man, you are as well informed as myself of every particular relating to his brilliant career; I will only, therefore, speak of his end. For some time past he had been visibly declining, still, his mental faculties seemed to rise superior to the attacks of bodily suffering, which increased at length into such severe paroxysms as to convince all around him he could not long resist their violence. At length, an attack more sudden and alarming than the former ones, carried him off. The king was deeply affected at the intelligence, and the duc d'Estissac, keeper of the wardrobe, and who had long been in the habit of the closest friendship with the deceased count, burst into so uncontrollable a fit of grief as to call for an humble apology on his part for having so far yielded to his feelings in the presence of his majesty. "Mention it not, my lord," answered Louis, "but if your loss is great, think how much more severe must mine be."

On the day following the death of M. de Maurepas a fête was to have been given by monsieur at Brunoy, at which the queen had promised to be present; but, upon receiving intimation of the decease of the late minister, she sent to inform her brother-in-law, that the melancholy event would render all gaiety unpleasant to her; nor would she even accept an invitation to join in several hunting parties, got up purposely to rouse her from her dejection. Perhaps it may not be amiss to relate to you a matter of etiquette sedulously observed in all royal residences. No dead body is permitted to remain in them for an instant, and the very moment in which a person, no matter of what rank or distinction, has rendered his last sigh, must witness his instantaneous removal, without the least regard for the grief of his family. Madame de Maurepas, well aware that her husband's last hour was approaching, and equally certain that he would be treated after death as was usual in similar cases, demanded and obtained from the king all that etiquette permitted him to grant—a delay of six hours, which she employed in preparing an apartment in the hermitage, (a château built in the park at Versailles for madame de Pompadour, and given by Louis XVI. to the comte and comtesse de Maurepas for their lifetime,) in which to deposit the body of her husband. It soon arrived, merely wrapped in a robe de chambre, and carried in a sedan chair; after seeing every preparation completed, madame de Maurepas quitted Versailles and returned to Paris, where she received every kindness and sympathy from the royal family. On the following morning as the king was rising, he suddenly exclaimed, in a tone of deep feeling and sentiment, "Alas, I shall never again hear the step of my friend, nor feel that both master and servant are alike preparing for the duties of the day."

To understand this you must bear in mind that the apartments occupied by the comte de Maurepas were immediately above those of his majesty. However,

M. de Maurepas was but indifferently regretted by the nation, for which, indeed, he had done but trifling service. He seemed completely to leave events to the control of passing circumstances, without once seeking to avert any threatened mischief. Gay and trifling, he looked upon power as a child would regard a toy, but as the means of ministering to his amusement and gratification.

The choice of a successor now engrossed the attention of all, and, as may be imagined, the duc de Choiseul ranged himself among the candidates for the vacant office; but, spite of the cabals and intrigues set afloat by his partisans, his suit failed from the unconquerable repugnance entertained for him by the king, and the lukewarm manner in which his former patroness, the queen, interested herself in his favour. The truth was, the Polignacs were entirely averse to seeing such a man as de Choiseul enter into office; they dreaded his stern integrity and uncompromising virtue; in a word, they felt that they should miss the leniency and carelessness of M. de Maurepas, and they resolved to oppose him with all their might. Madame Adelaide, however, whose unfortunate hand had bestowed the comte de Maurepas on the French nation, was anxious to make it a second present in the person of the cardinal de Bernis, and at one time she had very nearly succeeded. When I heard the possibility of the return of this old minister of Louis XV. I could but recall the constant expression of the poor duc d'Aiguillon, "Depend upon it that in France a man may gain anything who has patience to wait for it, and live on hope till it arrives." He was right in the case of M. de Bernis, who had been just twenty-one years in exile and disgrace.

But madame Adelaide was the only person who could be found to support the cardinal, and it was insinuated to the king, that M. de Vergennes would be quite equal to the direction of affairs, aided by the different ministers, who would all assist him in their

different departments. In this manner a choice disagreeable to those who governed the queen, and through her the kingdom, was skilfully avoided.

About this time Beaumarchais produced his comedy of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and never did a piece so utterly void of sense and reason produce such an effect. A general outcry arose against the author; king, clergy, ministry, and magistracy, alike inveighed against the disclosure it presented of their favourite vices. His majesty protested a hundred times that so scandalous a production should never be represented on the stage; while Beaumarchais would protest, with equal earnestness, "It shall be played, for it is the living picture of the age, and those who fear to see their countenances reflected in the mirror need not look at it." In the end, Beaumarchais prevailed, and the play was acted amid universal applause.

There was in Paris, about the same period, another writer, who, if he created a less noisy reputation, was much more generally liked and esteemed, and that was the chevalier de Saint Florian, belonging to the establishment of the duc de Penthièvre. This amiable man excelled in a pleasing style of romance, and depicted the delights of a pastoral life in a style at once pure and tender; he wrote besides several beautiful idylls and elegiac poems, and was beloved by all for the conciliating sweetness of his disposition. Assuredly, no one would ever have thought of laying to his charge the infamous couplets which appeared in Paris shortly after the birth of the dauphin, lines so vile that it could only be supposed that the writer had dipped his pen in the venom of the viper. Twice these abominable verses were brought to me, but having once cast my eyes over them, I threw them with disgust into the fire. The queen, with the whole of the royal family, were greatly scandalized by this abominable calumny; you can scarcely conceive the atrocities they laid to the charge of the king, queen, &c., &c. One thing has always puzzled me, how it can be that

princes never seem to discover the treacherous wretches who surround them. The late king, speaking on this subject, said to me, "I am perfectly convinced that I am surrounded by a set of hypocritical Damiens, who would assassinate me with their tongues. I know that my court is filled with persons who blame me, decry me, calumniate me, and seek to render me either hateful or ridiculous to my subjects; and I am expected to bear all this patiently, to support these criminal attacks, and even to load with benefits those who are guilty of them; this, madame la comtesse, is one of the privileges of royalty."

At length, the wretched author of these infamous compositions was discovered; he was named François Laurent Jacquet, formerly a lieutenant in Lons le Saulnier in Franche Comté, who, for various acts of roguery, was compelled to relinquish his commission, and he accordingly came to Paris, the usual asylum for all sharpers and swindlers, and commenced dealing in contraband publications, or any other species of traffic, no matter what. Among other means of adding to his income, he became spy to the police, and was also in the pay of Holland, England, Leipsic, and Frankfort, to which places he was constantly paying hurried and mysterious visits.

He first composed an atrocious libel against the queen, then, showing the verses I have before mentioned to the comte de Maurepas, he hinted, with vast mystery, that the work had been printed in London, and that he would, for a commensurate reward, take a journey thither, and undertake to buy it up. This offer was eagerly accepted, and Jacquet, furnished with money, went to England, from which he shortly after returned, bringing a considerable portion of the work, but not nearly the whole of it. Again was Jacquet despatched, who, well paid, came home, protesting that he had with him every line of the offensive poem. But this time Providence watched over his villany, and led him into his own snare. The printer

had, by mistake, enclosed with the pamphlet the original manuscript, in the handwriting of Jacquet, with all the corrections, alterations, and other marks necessary to identify him as the author. The consequence of this discovery was the commitment of M. Jacquet to the Bastille, where he paid the penalty of his crimes with his life. He was hanged, and his body thrown into a ditch destined for these secret executions.

In this manner were the people led on to despise their queen, and by such infamous means did those wretches who wished ill to her seek to detach the king from the tender affection he bore her. The birth of a dauphin, by strengthening the credit and influence of the queen, only increased the hatred and animosity of her enemies. In my next letter I shall treat more fully upon this unfortunate and distressing subject, using, at the same time, all possible delicacy while discussing it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Fresh intrigues—Fête given by the *gardes du corps* to the queen—The living statue—Isabelle, her narrative—The Othello of the colonies.

I HAD flattered myself I should hear no more of M. de Montesquieu, but I was premature in my expectations, for I very soon received a visit from him, in which he openly intimated to me that his royal master desired to have some further conversation with me. "My lord," returned I, "I am the devoted servant of his royal highness, and fully sensible of the honour he does me in deigning to bestow so great a portion of his attention upon me; but, as I am resolved not to

endanger my present tranquillity by meddling with any political cabal or intrigue, I would fain ask you to persuade your master to drive me entirely from his recollection."

But this was neither the intention of master or man, who were both resolved either to satisfy their eager curiosity, or to involve me in an intrigue of the most dangerous nature, the real bent of which I just began to perceive. Those about monsieur had beheld with deep vexation the birth of a dauphin, who so completely excluded their patron from a succession to the throne. Some of the party had consulted Cagliastro, who positively declared that monsieur should be king after his brother. This prediction had half turned the head of the marquis de Montesquieu, who would willingly have sought the aid of Lucifer himself to realize so delightful a promise. You may possibly remember the absurd reports that were in circulation about this, originating, no doubt, in some rash and unthinking observation which had fallen from monsieur, and had been construed by his enemies into a declaration of purposes he never once conceived. I, too, was said to be an accomplice in the propagation of a calumny, which was nothing short of high treason in my estimation; all these things put me so completely on my guard that M. de Montesquieu could make nothing of me. Some days had elapsed, when I was surprised by a hasty visit from Céline.

"I have weighty matters to disclose," said she, "but this time you must promise me to be silent."

"Are they trying to find the king another mistress?"

"Worse than that; a scheme is in agitation to separate him from his queen."

"Nonsense, Céline; how can you listen to such folly?"

"Treat it not as unworthy of your attention, I beseech you, unless, indeed, you mean me to take your disbelief of its truth as a mere pretence for concealing the part you take in the plot; for I must forewarn you that you are said to be deeply concerned in it."

My curiosity was now on the stretch, and I accordingly issued orders that no person should be admitted; and taking Céline into my boudoir, I seated myself beside her, and waited for her to open the conversation. At last she spoke, by inquiring whether I knew a comte de N——.

"Oh, yes," said I; "a kind of half fop, half pedant, a —"

"Hold, I beg, madame la comtesse; be not too severe upon my future husband, of whose discretion I am sorry to say I cannot boast overmuch. Well, from him I learned that a scheme is in agitation to banish the Polignacs and the queen at the same time. At first I laughed at the idea of such a thing, but by way of proving the confidence reposed in him, the count added that the plot was well known to you, who had promised to appear when called upon, and formally to repeat various matters of deep importance intrusted to you by his late majesty."

Céline next proceeded to lay before me the particulars of a most infamous conspiracy, got up by the partisans of monsieur, without his having the smallest participation in it. I eagerly denied all knowledge of the affair, to the great delight of Céline, whose activity and zeal on the present occasion obtained my warmest thanks.

It was not long before I was called upon to play my part with all necessary caution, and when beset by the emissaries of monsieur, I contented myself with replying, "These matters are better discussed with your employer; let me see *him*, and, I doubt not, we shall speedily understand each other."

My hint was taken, and an appointment made for an interview on the following day with the person most deeply interested. I repaired to the place wrapped in a large cloak, which completely concealed my figure, and perceived a man traversing the spot with rapid and eager steps; directly he perceived me he stopped, and, addressing me, said,

"Let my ardent curiosity plead my excuse for causing you the trouble and inconvenience of this meeting."

"Nay, my lord," replied I; "whatever may be the cause, the honour of being summoned to attend you brings its own reward."

"I will be candid," answered my companion, "and avow, as the true reason of my desiring this interview, my ardent desire to learn all that the late king thought and said upon various subjects; his experience will be of the highest benefit to me."

"I believe," returned I, "that his late majesty was remarkable for no particular sentiments, except his abhorrence of the long robes, and his fear and contempt of many of his courtiers."

"And no doubt he was right; but his conversation, I should presume, was not entirely confined to these two points."

"Oh, no; matters of gallantry came in occasionally for their share, but they referred principally to myself, and would in no way interest your royal highness."

I flattered myself that I had tolerably well warded off this blow; but the enemy returned to the attack, and that in so direct a manner as to leave me no choice. I therefore said, addressing my interrogator,

"Were I in the place of your royal highness, I would not trouble myself with such matters, for however innocent your own motives, there are others who, presuming upon the curiosity expressed by you, venture to pry into secrets wholly unfit and unnecessary for them to know; and I learn from several places that the persons whose names are contained in this list are now engaged in a most dangerous conspiracy, which they declare to be known and approved by your highness."

The prince started, and I saw that I had struck home.

"Are you fully aware," madam, said he, at length, "of the importance of such an assertion as this?"

"I am indeed," replied I; "and the respect I bear

your royal highness, as well as all your family, will not allow me to conceal from you that persons in your confidence are abusing it so far, as to plan the most atrocious schemes, of which they give you the whole credit."

I then related all I had learnt from Céline.

"How many thanks do I not owe you," answered the prince, "and from what a precipice have you rescued me! never can I be sufficiently grateful to you for warning me of such imminent danger."

"I was well aware that my recital would rouse your highness's indignation; but still, I doubt not, these mistaken attempts to further your interest have originated merely in an excess of zeal and attachment on the part of those who projected them."

"Well, well, I will endeavour to believe so; but nevertheless, these acts of folly give me the deepest pain."

"Nay, my lord, these conspiracies can be immediately hushed at your bidding; and, for my own part, I shall be silent as the grave."

The prince broke out in loud complaints at the mistaken zeal of his friends, and I could but admire the nobleness with which he refused to justify himself from all personal participation in the criminal acts they proposed. After a minute's pause he turned to me, saying, "I believe you are right, and that silent contempt is the only punishment for the inventor of the calumnies you have just communicated to me. I will not, therefore, take any further revenge on the individuals you have pointed out to me."

I was much amused with this scheme, for appearing angry with those who were, in reality, highest in his favour and regard. However, my point was gained; I therefore bade the prince adieu, and returned home with the same secresy I came.

About this time the duc de Chartres committed a most extraordinary act, by appointing the comtesse de Genlis *gouverneur* to his three sons. This nomination

he made it his business to report to the king, who was then at Versailles. His majesty listened to him with grave attention, and merely replied, "You are at full liberty to do as you think proper with your children, cousin; so many chances exclude them from the succession, that it is of little importance whether they are educated under male or female guidance."

Still, the selection of madame de Genlis was a matter of considerable astonishment to many, and the appointing a female to a post, hitherto invariably filled by one of the opposite sex, excited universal curiosity, while the chevalier de Bonard, *sous gouverneur*, a man of much sense and many accomplishments, not choosing to act under petticoat government, threw up his employment in disgust, nor could all the entreaties of the duke prevail upon him to continue in his family while so strange and unnatural a state of things continued.

The recovery of her majesty was the signal for fresh fêtes and renewed festivities, and, among other entertainments provided on the occasion, was a grand dress ball, given by the *gardes du corps* in honour of the queen, at the close of January, 1782, at which elegance and luxury were so mingled by the hand of taste, as to afford the liveliest satisfaction to the royal party.

The queen's aversion to etiquette was evinced on this as well as every other occasion; custom required that her majesty should go through a long and tedious dance with the commander of the *gardes du corps*, who happened, upon this occasion, to be a M. de Pracy, a most respectable old man, but ill calculated, from his age, to figure in a ball-room. The queen, justly considering that he would never be able to go through his task, merely stood up with him in a minuet, after which she dismissed him, under pretence of being too much fatigued to dance more; but scarcely had M. de Pracy made his parting bow, than the queen, who had been languidly reclining on a sofa, suddenly rose, and joined the newly introduced

country dances, which were much more to her taste. Eight *gardes du corps* were appointed stewards of the ball, with orders to do the honours of it, a commission they executed to the general satisfaction of the whole assembly; and so greatly did the queen approve of their zeal, that, by way of marking her sense of it, she selected one of them, a M. Mauret, as her partner in the next dance; but so completely was the object of her favour overcome by this flattering mark of it, that he became at once timid and embarrassed, until the gracious affability of her majesty set him more at his ease; and when, at the conclusion of the dance, he had bowed her majesty to her seat, she sent him a splendid golden box containing a colonel's commission.

So far all was well; but Marie Antoinette, to whose eye all the persons of the *gardes du corps* were perfectly well known, perceived one utterly strange to her; curious to learn his name, she called the prince de Poix, captain of the *gardes*, and charged him to inquire who the stranger could be. The prince soon returned with the information, that the object of her curiosity was the comte de Luçon, a captain in a provincial regiment. The prince added, that when he inquired by what title he was there, the comte de Luçon replied,

"If I do not already possess the privilege of being present with the *gardes du corps*, there exists no reason why I should not be qualified to do so."

"Then, sir," retorted M. de Poix, "it is her majesty's pleasure that you should retire until that time arrives."

Her majesty, indignant at this want of respect on the part of the comte de Luçon, sent immediate orders to M. de Ségur, minister of the war department, to command the immediate departure of comte de Luçon for his regiment.

This manner of introducing punishment and correction at a ball, where her only business was to behave amiably and agreeably to all, produced a very unfavourable opinion of the queen, and while all allowed

that the comte de Luçon had acted improperly and presumptuously, they still argued that her wisest as well as most conciliating step would have been to have taken no notice of the presence of the captain, more especially after she had herself so openly violated the etiquette of the ball-room.

A lady of the court, the marquise de M——, still beautiful, although no longer in the first charms of youth, remarked among the *gardes du corps* one who resembled, from his extreme height and muscular figure, Goliath of Gath, when decked with all the insignia of war, while his fine handsome features impressed the beholder with admiration. Until this gentleman (who was named M. de Palais) had destroyed the favourable effect produced by opening his mouth, the marchioness continued to gaze at him with eager and approving eyes; she had, however, given him permission to call upon her, and M. de Palais, who, although a man of good family and expectations, had seen little of the world, went to consult a brother officer how he should behave upon the occasion? His friend listened to him with some attention, and then replied, "My good fellow, in your place I should feel considerable embarrassment; the lady you speak of belongs to one of the first families in France, and is continually surrounded by princes, dukes, and peers, all likely enough merely to intend a laugh at your expense; how you came to accept her invitation I cannot conceive, but, since you have so far committed yourself, my advice is, that you neither speak nor move hand or foot; by which means you will be set down as a sort of observant philosopher, and by remaining fixed on your seat, your eyes cast down, and your arms fixed to your sides, you will at once escape the charge of effrontery, and the odium of provincial awkwardness."

M. de Palais, who, like most persons of weak understanding, believed his friend's advice to be pure gospel, promised an exact conformity with it, so much the more readily as the passiveness enjoined came precisely

within the scope of his comprehension; he therefore entered the drawing-room of the marchioness bolt upright, as though he had that instant come from the hands of the drill-sergeant, and, fixing himself in a chair, remained motionless and erect, without uttering one word. Madame de M—— looked in silent amazement at this singular fashion of visiting a lady; never could a more striking contrast have presented itself; picture to yourself on the one hand a lively, petulant, and animated female, talking with enthusiastic fervour, and on the other, a colossal image, whose finely moulded features appeared changed by the touch of some enchanter's wand into solid stone; in vain did the poor marchioness seek by every encouragement to kindle this supine and senseless mass, and a whole hour passed away in fruitless endeavours to extract more than a frigid yes or no from the icicle which sat stiff and immovable before her. Weary, at length, of the ungrateful task, madame de M—— rose abruptly from her seat; "Sir," said she, with considerable warmth and indignation, "I understand the statues which now decorate the gallery of Versailles are to be transported to Paris; let me advise you to draw up a memorial to obtain a place among them, it will be a permanent situation, and I promise to use my utmost efforts to obtain it for you, for not one of the figures in question can have greater claims to it than yourself." So saying, madame de M——, with a sarcastic bend of the head, intimated by a motion of the hand, that he might retire. Spite of the imbecility of M. de Palais, he could not help understanding and feeling this pointed rebuke; he withdrew, however, awake to the necessity, when next honoured by the notice of any courtly dame, of exerting himself beyond the utterance of a few monosyllables, or the remaining in a state of respectful immobility. By way of satisfaction for the ridiculous figure he had been made to cut, he called the friend out who had given him the ridiculous counsel he had so faithfully followed, and all he derived from

the meeting was some severe wounds which confined him to his bed for several months.

The lady from whom I heard this amusing anecdote, related to me, at the same time, another, relative to the marquise de C., whose husband had for some time experienced considerable uneasiness at the attentions of a certain young abbé, whose delicate complexion and melting blue eyes had made but too tender an impression upon the heart of the lady. The suspicions of M. de C. became certainties, when, returning home one day somewhat unexpectedly, he surprised his wife and the abbé in a *tête-à-tête,* too unequivocal to be mistaken. The poor abbé fled precipitately before the enraged husband, who stood vociferating threats of death and vengeance, while the lady, coolly interrupting him, inquired whether he liked truffles?

"Talk not to me of such things," exclaimed the irritated marquis, "your conduct, your shameful —"

"And oysters, my lord; do you not like them very much?"

"Madam, madam, drive me not mad; what has my taste for such things to do with your violation of the marriage vow?"

"Nay, my lord, I ask it but as a favour; I will endeavour to justify myself after you have answered me."

"Well, then, you drive me mad; but if I must speak, I do like them."

"Ah, my lord, we have each our tastes; you for truffles and oysters, and I for young and handsome abbés."

This absurd and extravagant mode of justification had the effect of softening the violence of M. de C.'s rage, and, I believe, a reconciliation ultimately took place between the parties.

The most inconceivable accounts were promulgated about this time of the high favour and esteem in which the *gardes du corps* were held by the ladies of the court; a perfect rage seemed to exist, and many were

said to owe their rapid rise more to their handsome persons than intrinsic merit. I will not, however, relate to you half the scandalous stories I have heard on the subject, but proceed to mention a work which appeared just at this period, and caused a lively sensation among the literati of Paris. I allude to the *Adèle et Théodore* of madame de Genlis, and which was supposed by the writer to throw Rousseau's *Emile* quite in the back-ground as a system of education. *Adèle et Théodore* is a mere work of pretence, in which a parcel of romantic episodes or barely decent recitals are mixed with a vast display of pedantry and virtue. M. de Vaucheuil asserted that it was a book calculated only to be placed in the hands of fashionable females, or those half lost in the vortex of pleasure by way of inducement to resume the right road, but wholly unfit for the perusal of the young and innocent.

Madame de Genlis has been further reproached with having placed those in a ridiculous or satirical point of view whom she should most have respected, and among others to have caricatured madame Grinard de la Reynière, who had acted the part of a second mother to her in all her misfortunes and trials. It was impossible to mistake the picture, it was madame de la Reynière in everything but the name. This piece of ingratitude did madame de Genlis no good in the eyes of the world, and eventually drew down upon her the enmity of the son of madame Reynière, who vented his displeasure in a most severe epigram; indeed, its severity made it lose its effect, for it overshot its mark, while the flattering reception bestowed upon *Adèle et Théodore*, and its immense success involved the countess with the philosophical party, which had long, for some cause I am ignorant of, been greatly opposed to her.

I must now leave sight of these subjects to speak to you of a foreign wonder which made its appearance in Paris, and this was a black Venus, so beautiful as to turn the heads of all who beheld her; not that I should give her a place in these memoirs, had not my name

been most iniquitously mixed up in the various calumnies related of her.

The name of this dark-skinned goddess was Isabel, who resembled her sister negresses in nothing but complexion; she had neither the flat features nor woolly hair which characterise her species, and her charms had already been so productive as to amass for her a splendid fortune, with which she had quitted the new world to enjoy herself in Paris. At her first arrival Isabel was pronounced a charming creature, and more than one lord of the court vied with the more humble yet wealthy financier who came to lay his heart and purse at the feet of the fair enchantress, whose singular, yet magnificent and becoming style of dress, heightened as it was by the splendour of the costliest gems, arranged with the most exquisite art, foreign and peculiar accent, and unlimited command of wealth soon placed her on the very summit of popular admiration. Nothing could exceed the enthusiasm she excited, and when she repaired to Versailles to enjoy the spectacle of his majesty dining in public, that place was thronged with persons anxious to obtain one glimpse of the captivating negress. At the moment when her eye rested on the comte d'Artois, a lively burst of approbation escaped her, and turning to a friend who was beside her, she exclaimed, "that for one hour's conversation with one so formed to please she would willingly give a thousand louis."

Nothing is lost at court, and this observation being repeated to the object of it, his royal highness smiled, and merely replied, that he had no désire to increase his revenues by such means. However, he was evidently flattered by this ingenuous and natural expression of regard, and, if report speaks true, the lovely Isabel was shortly after invited to view Bagatelle, the honours of which were done by the comte d'Artois himself.

For my own part, the incessant mention made of Isabel by all the persons I met with, inspired me with

an eager curiosity to see so strange a creature as a Venus with a black skin. I therefore communicated my wishes to Céline, who promised to escort the sable beauty to Luciennes. She was to meet Isabel at an evening party the following night, and make arrangements with her for being introduced to me. Isabel, informed of my sentiments, determined to profit by them without the aid of any other person; accordingly, the next day she surprised me by unexpectedly arriving at Luciennes. She was dressed in the utmost excess of Asiatic splendour; her short robe of crimson damask was embroidered with gold, and trimmed with a fringe of the same material; below this descended a white satin petticoat similarly decorated, and her feet were set off by a pair of shoes the same colour as her dress, clasped together with diamonds that might have graced the diadem of an empress. Her small and beautifully rounded waist was encircled by a species of Indian shawl, made of the finest wool and delicately worked in gold; this belt, so splendid and yet so singular, seemed gently to confine the figure without conveying the least idea of that tightness and compression so hurtful and unbecoming, and excited in my admiring eyes the greatest desire to possess such an article of luxury; the bosom of the robe was trimmed with a rich fringe of gold, while a handkerchief of the most costly texture India sends from her looms was twisted around the head of my visitor with a piquancy and originality no other hand could have imitated. I will not swell the catalogue by enumerating the magnificent necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets, agrafes, &c., &c., which completed the costume of Isabel, suffice it that they corresponded in splendour and richness with the rest of her attire, and must have amounted to an enormous sum.

As I surveyed my unexpected guest, I could but admit that, with the exception of her complexion, she was most captivating. Picture to yourself a female of light, yet finely rounded figure, above the common height,

whose every motion seemed influenced by a soft yet elegant voluptuousness, eyes of the most lustrous black, whose piercing rays were shaded and modified by dark fringed lids, which occasionally fell almost over the sparkling orbs they partly concealed; a mouth formed in beauty's rarest mould, and a smile which displayed such white and pearly teeth as to be wholly irresistible. I have always been an admirer of a beautiful ear, and that of Isabel was of the most perfect and delicate formation; and when she extended her hand its touch resembled something between satin and velvet. In a firm and collected tone she entreated my pardon for so unceremoniously presenting herself before me, "But you must attribute my so impatiently casting off the usual forms of introduction to my eager curiosity to behold one whom I would fain admire without interruption."

To this compliment, of which I give you the sense although I cannot recollect the precise terms in which it was couched, I replied in a similar manuer, which seemed so greatly to please and encourage Isabel that she clasped her arms about me, begging to be allowed to touch my cheeks with her lips. I could not possibly refuse this request, and we became in a few minutes the best friends in the world. Isabel seated herself opposite, with her back to the window. "Let me," said she, "fix those lovely features in my memory: I had heard such talk of your matchless charms that I feared to find (as is too often the case) that report had overrated them, but in this instance the reality far exceeds the description." This open and undisguised admiration could not but be grateful to one, who, like myself, had nearly lived upon the incense of flattery and adulation, still, a desire to turn the conversation led me to inquire of Isabel what she thought of France?

"It is a terrestrial paradise," replied she, "where all is joy and delight; still I shall soon quit it."

"Nay," said I, "why leave a spot where you are held in such high favour and estimation?"

"Because," replied my guest, "I would not wait

until some fresh object deprives me of the popularity I now enjoy, and converts me from a creature surrounded by worshippers into a poor despised and neglected being. No; I shall exchange your gay and joyful France for a country where the colour of my skin will excite neither wonder nor disgust, and where, too, I may find one faithful heart to love me for myself alone."

"Oh, oh!" said I, smiling; "so Cupid guides your actions, does he? I hardly know how to ask it, but it would be the highest gratification to me if you would oblige me by relating your previous history."

"Which account will you have?" said she, "the true one, or that with which I amuse the curious?"

"The former, by all means," answered I, "that is, if you will really bestow such a mark of confidence in me; the latter I have heard a hundred times."

"Listen," returned my companion, "listen then to the woes of poor Isabel.

"I was born beneath the burning sky of Africa, and while an infant at my mother's breast, that parent was seized and sold as a slave, but her broken spirit refused to sustain her; she gradually sunk during our voyage to St. Domingo, and died shortly after she had arrived there. I must have inevitably perished had not a negress, whose son had just expired, taken pity upon me and adopted me instead of the infant of which she had been deprived. The master to whom I belonged experienced a sudden reverse of fortune, and I had been three times sold before reaching the age of ten years. I grew up, and at fifteen no less than six lovers strove to obtain my heart, while my affections were equally sought by my superiors and inferiors. My choice fell upon a young and handsome black, named Plato, whose violent and jealous passion could brook no partners in my affections; and how could a poor slave like myself engage to preserve an inviolable fidelity? In vain did I beseech of him to be patient,

and rest contented with the assurance of reigning undisputed lord over my love. He would listen to me with heaving breast and compressed lips, then suddenly, as a milder humour came over him, catch me in his arms, bedew my cheeks with his burning tears, and as hastily rush from my presence, as if unable to endure his own thoughts; and as I sincerely prized his attachment, I fully sympathized with the distressed state of his mind.

"Meanwhile, my master, each day more and more captivated by my growing charms, bestowed on me my freedom, the most precious gift he could have granted to so wild and impetuous a heart as mine, which struggled against the slightest feeling of restraint or control. Yet no sooner was the coveted blessing mine than I felt uneasy in its possession, and scarce knew how to employ the boon; surely, said I to myself, women were never formed for a life of freedom and independence, nature intended them to live the slaves of those who are the acknowledged lords of the universe; at least, so it proved in my case, and the homage bestowed upon the free and wealthy Isabel was less grateful to my heart than that lavished upon the humble negress. Formerly, each act of folly or extravagance I committed seemed to me a sort of triumph over my master, while now, every imprudence was at my own expense, and there was no longer the charm of forbidden fruit. Still, there was something new and gratifying in having in my turn slaves who waited but a look or nod to fulfil my every wish, nay, almost to anticipate them, for the unbounded love of my late master, made me the sovereign disposer of his immense revenues, and every refinement which art or luxury could procure was profusely lavished upon me.

"I was one day receiving a visit from my late owner, when a slave entered, to give an account of the manner in which he had executed some commission intrusted to him. The voice attracted my attention, and the moment I raised my head, I recognised the features of

Plato, who, however, from the position in which I sat, quitted the apartment without in the least suspecting in whose presence he had been.

"'Who is that negro?' said I, when Plato had withdrawn.

"'A slave I have lately purchased; indeed, he has not been many days in my service,' was the reply.

"'He pleases me greatly,' returned I.

"'He is yours, then,' exclaimed my admirer, vehemently.

"'Nay,' answered I, ''tis not as a gift I would accept him, let me become his purchaser and I shall owe you many thanks.'

"'What folly is this?'

"'It may be so, I will not dispute the point; but tell me the price you demand for this slave.'

"'From you, nothing; accept from me the slave you desire, or leave him in my hands.'

"'You shall not escape so easily,' cried I; 'for here I swear never to admit you to my presence again until I have fairly purchased and paid the price for the negro who but now quitted us.'

"In vain did my lover seek to overrule my objection by pointing out the extreme absurdity of my determination; I was immovably fixed in my resolve, and he, finding me inflexible, endeavoured to mislead me by undervaluing his new acquisition, for whom he at length reluctantly agreed to take his price, which he stated to be very trivial; but I knew the worth of Plato too well to be deceived in this particular, and I refused to be satisfied until Jacques Plato had been formally and legally transferred to me at the price he would have fetched in the market. I was sitting alone, anxiously awaiting the arrival of my new purchase, when Plato, ignorant whose hands he had fallen into, entered my apartment. At the sight of me he rushed forward, and threw himself at my feet.

"'Rise, Plato,' said I, 'rise, no longer a slave, but a free man; from my hand receive your liberty.'

"'Never,' cried he, passionately, 'unless with it, Isabel, you bestow what my heart covets even beyond this precious gift; the right to call you wholly and undividedly mine. Think you that freedom can extinguish the raging jealousy which consumes me? No, no, free or in bondage you are the centre of all my fondest wishes; but dearly, madly as I love you, I would sooner see you dead before me than look on and behold you smiling on others. Promise me, then, to love me exclusively and alone, or take back the useless gift you offer me, and sell me to some new master who will remove me far from these fatal shores.'

"I raised Plato from the ground, and, with the fondest protestations, sought to calm his doubts, although I carefully evaded giving the required promise, which I knew full well circumstances would not have permitted me to keep. My negro lover, finding he could obtain nothing further, feigned to be resigned to my arguments; but, at the arrival of any fresh visitor, or any mark of favour or notice bestowed by me, Plato would relapse into such wild and unconquerable jealousy as made me shudder both for him and myself. Just about this time there arrived at Port-au-Prince, a young Swede, the handsomest, weakest, and most ostentatious of his sex, the son of a Creole, who had married and settled in the cold climes of the North. He had now visited our genial climes to claim the rich inheritance bequeathed him by his paternal grandmother. In a short time the whole town rung with the account of his follies and extravagance, and each unmarried female spread her brightest lures to win him for her own, while the gay and fickle comte de Rosencrantz (for so was the captivating Swede called) fluttered from flower to flower without fixing his choice upon any. My curiosity was on the rack to behold one so apparently proof against all the artillery of female beauty, and chance soon seconded my wishes, for some friends brought him to my house to pay a morning visit. Never did I see such matchless,

such perfect harmony of form and feature, accompanied with a graceful carelessness of manner more calculated to make its way with a female than the most studied courtesy. I loved him the instant I beheld him, and it was not very difficult for me to perceive that the impression was mutual; an explanation soon ensued, and the comte de Rosencrantz became my devoted admirer. Hitherto, I had preserved a strict fidelity towards Plato, whose ardent love seemed each day to increase; but in the infatuating passion which took possession of me, I forgot my former lover, and all I had promised him.

"A month passed away in all the delight of finding myself beloved by one, until now, proverbially capricious and inconstant; for de Rosencrantz became each day more and more enamoured, until, at length, he seemed to live only in my presence, while the triumph I had achieved made me the envy of all the females on the island. But what had become of Plato all this while? Alas, I knew not nor cared; all I could observe was, that he seemed wholly engrossed by the labours committed to his charge, and if by chance I encountered him, he looked at me with hollow eyes and a bitter sarcastic smile.

"One morning de Rosencrantz informed me that he was compelled to quit me early to make preparations for attending a grand ball given by the governor, which was not to terminate till a late hour. I heard this announcement with much vexation; however, I strove to repress it, and merely replying that the time would pass very differently with me, I bade my lover farewell. An unaccountable shuddering came over me as de Rosencrantz withdrew from the apartment, and I listened to his receding footsteps with a melancholy presentiment I strove in vain to overcome. The day dragged heavily along, and at night a heavy oppression seemed to hang about my heart and banish sleep till a late hour, when, just as I had fallen into an uneasy slumber, I was suddenly awakened by the glare of a

lamp, which flashed across my eyes, and, at the same moment, I felt myself rudely seized by the arm; terrified, I gazed around, and perceived Plato standing by me with that air of affected indifference he had for some weeks past assumed.

"'Madam,' said he, with a sort of ironical contempt, 'may it please you to rise?'

"'To rise, Plato, and wherefore?'

"'There exists a necessity for your so doing with as little delay as possible.'

"'I cannot, I will not subscribe to so singular a command unless you can produce a satisfactory reason for this untimely intrusion. Ah, surely Plato,' cried I, as fresh terrors took possession of my brain; 'you would not murder me!'

"'*Murder you*, madam,' returned Plato, with a sardonic smile, 'oh no, 'tis the comte de Rosencrantz who desires to see you.'

"'What, what has befallen him?' shrieked I; 'for the love of heaven tell me what of the count?'

"'A negro has just arrived, bringing information that the comte de Rosencrantz was taken suddenly ill at the governor's ball, and was compelled to quit it at an early hour, and has been carried home suffering greatly; he now begs to see you as quickly as possible, trusting to find a healing balm in your presence.'

"Astonished at the calm frigidity of Plato, and equally terrified at that indescribable wildness and bewilderment of his look and mien, I rose, and hastily wrapping myself in a loose dress, I informed the slave that I was ready. ''Tis well,' replied he; 'time presses, madam, let us be going.'

"I strove to disguise the terrors I felt, by affecting to treat the news of de Rosencrantz's illness as a matter of little import, while I constrained myself to show the utmost kindness and interest for Plato; but to all my remarks and conciliatory overtures, one invariable answer was returned, 'Come, madam, you must be quick, your presence is much needed.'

" 'True,' replied I, much piqued, 'for should he be very ill, my kisses may restore him to health.'

" 'Yes,' rejoined Plato, 'I should not wonder at their reviving the dead.'

These words fell heavily on my ear, and deprived me of all further power to keep up the conversation. It was now nearly an hour past midnight, when, guided by the dim glimmer of Plato's lamp, I followed my conductor through the deserted streets of the town. All at once my companion stopped before the door of a house.

" 'Stay not, I conjure you,' cried I; 'the count is impatient.'

" 'Oh, no, he is in peace; besides, we have reached the spot to which I was to guide you.'

" 'Arrived!' exclaimed I; 'where then, for heaven's sake, is de Rosencrantz?'

" 'Here,' cried Plato,' reaching from the dark recess of the doorway a heavy mass, which he raised in his arms to show to me; his lamp, which glared fully over it, revealed to me the corpse of my lover, pierced with innumerable wounds. A scream of horror escaped me, and I fell insensible on the ground.

" When I regained my senses a confused recollection of the dreadful events of the past night made me dread to open my eyes, lest they should again behold the bleeding form of de Rosencrantz; for I doubted not but Plato, after having so vindictively satisfied his revenge, had left me in the same fearful spot on which I had fallen, beside the mangled remains of my favoured lover. At length, when with a desperate effort I ventured a timid glance around me, I found myself extended on my bed with the first beams of morning light piercing the latticed windows; then I attributed the strange disturbance in my brain to the influence of some painful dream; but, alas! the transactions of the night were fixed too indelibly on my brain, and the reality rose but too horribly before me. Still, I could not imagine by what means I had

been brought back to my room, or how it was that I found myself in my bed. Unable to bear the agony of my own reflections, I rang my bell, when my female attendants entered, and with deep consternation, informed me, that the comte de Rosencrantz had been found assassinated before a house belonging to a lady with whom he had passed the night, (for his account to me of having to attend a ball at the governor's was merely an invention,) and his death was universally ascribed to the jealousy of the lady's husband, but neither my name nor that of Plato was at all involved in the affair. Spite of the infidelity of the count, I regretted his untimely death with a sincerity which procured for me an universal sympathy. I learned at the same time that Plato had disappeared, and little doubt was entertained of his having gone to join the maroon slaves, our ferocious neighbours. Two years passed away, and by degrees the recollection of this fatal adventure began to fade from my memory, and I once more mixed in the amusements natural to my age and situation. I had well nigh forgotten Plato also, when one beautiful night I went to enjoy the cool air on the terrace which surrounded the house, throwing myself on a seat, I desired to have an ice; it was brought me by a slave, who, kneeling, presented it. As I took it from him, the moonlight shone fully on his face, and discovered to me the features of Plato. A half scream escaped me, and, with an universal shudder, I arose, but, seizing me in his powerful grasp, the negro exclaimed,

"'Resume your seat, and remember that the slightest imprudence would be fatal to us both.'

"'Kill me not, Plato, I conjure you,' cried I, in faltering accents; 'mercy, mercy.'

"'Peace,' interrupted the negro, 'and listen to me; in sacrificing him whom you preferred to me I took all the vengeance I meditated against you; at the same time, I trusted that the fatal deed would either secure you wholly mine, or render me less madly devoted to

you; neither the one expectation nor the other has been realized, and I have now come to announce to you my final resolution; I give you one year in which to free yourself from the ensnaring connexions by which you are now surrounded; that term expired I will come to demand your final decision; but mark me, Isabel, I shall come armed with the same dagger which ——; but I will not trust myself to say more. Farewell, and remember when next we meet we are for ever united either in life or death.'

"So saying, Plato abruptly quitted me and escaped at once from the city. I have since learned that he had prevailed upon the negro who usually attended upon me to allow him to take his place for a few hours. The unexpected appearance of one I had long endeavoured to persuade myself would never again cross my path, joined to his alarming threats, terrified me to such an excess that I saw but one mode of ridding myself of all further importunity, and that was by quitting the island, and with that view I came to settle in France. But, shall I confess it? As the time approaches, an irresistible impulse seems to draw me to St. Domingo, and an invisible hand appears as if leading me, against my own will, back to my destiny and Plato. I strive, but in vain, to struggle with my fate, and I fear I must perforce yield to its decrees."

"How," exclaimed I, "can you endure the thoughts of marrying that odious man?"

"Alas, I know not how it is, but his idea is for ever uppermost in my mind, and triumphs over every other thought; were he to follow me here and put his designs into execution? You have now a true and faithful picture of my past life and most secret thoughts, and however you may blame, you must still pity me, for the gnawing anxiety which corrodes my heart even when the smile is brightest on my lip, and no sooner am I alone than I fancy myself again beside the bleeding corpse of de Rosencrantz, with the im-

placable Plato smiling with vindictive passion as he grasps the blood-stained dagger. The influence which attracts me to the assassin can only be accounted for on the same principle as the timid bird is fascinated by the gaze of the wily serpent."

CHAPTER XIX.

Bankruptcy of the prince de Guémenée—The Rohans—M. Grimrod de la Reynière—The comte de Mirabeau.

SUCH was the history of Isabel, whom I saw more than once after the interview I have been describing; indeed, our sudden intimacy excited no small portion of the public curiosity, and various conjectures were started as to the true nature of our discussions. At length, however, Isabel, who had been wavering between her hopes and fears, resolved upon quitting Paris to rejoin Plato at St. Domingo. She wrote to me soon after her arrival at Port-au-Prince, informing me that her happy destiny had freed her from all further dread of the vindictive negro, who had fallen by the hand of a comrade whom he had in some way injured, and, strange and inconceivable as it must appear, the infatuated woman regretted his loss.

Not being very desirous of involving myself in such a correspondence, I omitted replying to this letter, and, as a matter of course, I heard no more from Isabel.

About this time Paris was up in arms at the conduct shown by the marquis de Chabrillant towards Pernot the attorney. The latter, a man of the highest reputation, had engaged a front seat in one of the boxes of the *Théâtre Français*, and the marquis, happening to arrive late, and not knowing where to place himself,

very coolly desired M. Pernot to give up his seat. This peremptory and unjust order was of course resisted, and M. de Chabrillant carried his folly so far as to go and complain to one of the sentinels that he had been robbed by a person in the box he had just quitted, and pointed out M. Pernot as the guilty person. He was immediately seized, spite of all his protestations, and carried to the guard-house, where, after undergoing the rudest treatment, his accuser sent word he might be discharged. This dismissal, as well as the unjust seizure, were carefully reported by the object of this violence in a memorial formally drawn up and presented to parliament. The lively indignation excited by this overstretch of power convinced the marquis de Chabrillant and his family that there are bounds which even the highest born noble must not pass with impunity. In vain did the father and friends of M. de Chabrillant offer to the offended lawyer every possible satisfaction; he resolutely refused all compromise, declaring that the honour of the French citizens was involved in his own, and that the affair must take its course. Fresh attempts were made to mollify M. Pernot, who, at length, yielded, so far as to say that he would abandon the prosecution, provided he received his majesty's command to that effect; that M. de Chabrillant should bestow a large sum among the poor of the parish of St. Sulpice, the curé of which should give a regular receipt for the same, stating the reasons of the donation, which paper should be handed over to Pernot, and a public apology be inserted in every public journal for the outrage committed. These conditions were thought too severe, and the trial accordingly proceeded; a verdict was of course given in favour of M. Pernot, by which the aggressor was compelled to make formal attestation of his own injustice, as well as to bear testimony to the unsullied reputation of the plaintiff; and further, that M. de Chabrillant should lay down a considerable sum to defray the expenses incurred, the overplus to be divided among

the poor; and with this punishment, which was not nearly so heavy as was wished and expected, the public were compelled to be satisfied.

When next I received a visit from madame de Mirepoix, she hastily inquired,

"Well, my dear countess, have you heard that the prince de Guémenée is quite ruined? positively a bankrupt; indeed, he has been formally declared insolvent; I understand to no less an amount than 32,000,000 francs!"

"Yes," said I, "I have heard the news; I was present when the cardinal, speaking of it, said, that such an act of bankruptcy could only be committed by a sovereign or a Rohan."

"To which the duchesse de Luxembourg replied, in an aside whisper, to myself," returned the maréchale, "that it was to be hoped it would be the last act of sovereignty exercised by the house of Rohan."

"Think you," said I, "that the princesse de Guémenée will still preserve her post as governess to the children of France?"

"Assuredly not; her conduct has been quite as thoughtless and extravagant as that of her husband; besides, you know how gladly the queen will avail herself of any pretext to get rid of one who has so long stood in the way of the advancement of the duchesse de Polignac, who, you will now speedily hear, is nominated to succeed the princesse de Guémenée."

Madame de Mirepoix had a vast deal of worldly tact, and a shrewd penetration, which made her generally take a correct view of things, and I seldom found reason to regret following her advice. She told me further that the prince de Guémenée had disposed of his office of grand chamberlain to the duc de Bouillon, for 1,600,000 livres, and that the prince de Soubise, cruelly annoyed at these family misfortunes, had entirely withdrawn himself from public life, and saw none but his most intimate friends. This last piece of information inspired me with a sincere sympathy, and

I determined to go immediately and condole with the afflicted prince.

M. de Soubise received me kindly, and we mingled our tears and lamentations, while he drew bitter comparisons between the warmth and energy of Louis XV., and the phlegmatic coolness of his successor. Poor M. de Soubise inveighed bitterly against Louis XVI. for not preventing the misfortune of his son, as if even the treasury of a prince could stop the deficiency of 3,200,000 francs.

The prince begged of me to exercise all my influence with the cardinal de Rohan and his brother, to induce them to follow a prudent line of conduct, and this I promised to do, although with much reluctance, for I well knew all the difficulty and unthankfulness of the task.

Meanwhile, this downfal to the pride of the prince de Guémenée was no interruption to the pleasures of the court, which proceeded with unabated spirit; dancing, private theatricals, and all kinds of *jeux de société* filled up the evenings, with the occasional variation of concerts and musical *soirées*, while the mornings were devoted to a variety of gay and fashionable recreations; literature alone seemed banished from the gay throng, and the men of letters and literati of the day angrily decried amusements they could not share, while they deplored the indifference with which their royal mistress regarded their efforts to please.

One of the errors of the queen was certainly her neglect of the finest geniuses of the age, as well as her contempt for those who had so much power over the public opinion; and great as had been the fault of Louis XV. in these particulars, the evil continued with increased violence during the reign of his grandson.

Marie Antoinette was equally to blame in her avowed and marked preference of Gluck over every other musical composer. Princes should not announce a decided choice; their secret affections should

never interfere with that justice which calls upon them to preserve the strictest impartiality. But to return to the Rohan family. There was scarcely a grain of sense among the whole of its members; indeed, any person might have supposed that a wager existed which could commit the greatest folly and extravagance. The prince de Soubise, respectable on the one hand for his many excellent qualities, compromised his reputation by the license of his private life, and the unbridled liberty he gave to his passions. His daughter, the princesse de Guémenée, was weak and thoughtless; while his two brothers, the one a cardinal and grand almoner of France, (prince Louis,) and the other (prince Ferdinand) archbishop of Cambray, were distinguished only for their luxury, intrigues, and pecuniary èmbarrassments; superficial, and devoid of talent, yet vain and exacting, they expected to receive universal homage and distinction.

None but a simpleton like myself would have accepted the mission of attempting to preach reason to these two mitred coxcombs. Prince Ferdinand I rarely saw, but fortune threw him in my way most opportunely; he came one evening into my box at the opera when I was there with only M. de Montmorency, who soon took his departure, leaving me at full liberty to enter upon the promised conference.

Prince Ferdinand would have turned in disgust from the lecture of a potentate; I suppose he thought nothing I could say worth being angry about, for he listened very good-naturedly, and when I had concluded, replied,

"Well, and is it my fault if my brother is ruined? and because he chooses to do silly things am I to bear the weight of them? It is certainly a very great misfortune that he cannot pay his debts, but let his creditors wait with a little patience, and they will be paid sooner or later."

"But," said I, "patience is precisely the article those kind of persons are entirely destitute of; they

see themselves in danger of losing everything, and murmur they will."

"Then pray try your eloquence on them, my dear madam, by persuading them to be silent and save their breath."

I saw that this latter advice was all that was left for me to follow, and I accordingly dropped the subject. I had now the cardinal left to attack ere my commission was entirely fulfilled, and for that purpose I wrote a note, begging to see him at Luciennes. I was a great favourite with prince Louis, for he always found me ready to listen to his long list of grievances, while he was quite certain I should never imprudently reveal anything communicated to me; he therefore spoke at all times without the slightest reserve, related all his schemes for obtaining a reconciliation with the queen, and, had I wished it, I might have played an important part in his unfortunate trial. However, when he obeyed my summons to Luciennes, he came with so gay and animated a manner, that I was at no loss to open the conversation.

"How can you wear so smiling an aspect," said I, "when your brother ——?"

"Alas! why recall him to me, madam? he is, indeed, of all created beings at this moment the most wretched and forlorn; no money, no credit, no mistress! reduced to live as though he had never been born a prince—horrid idea!"

"And then," cried I, "consider his regret at having left so many honest tradesmen to curse *his* name, whose failure in paying their just claims, perhaps, consigns them to a prison."

"Oh, that is colouring the picture too highly; my brother has been unfortunate, no doubt, but such trifles as that have nothing to do with his present afflictions; besides, are not sovereigns perpetually becoming bankrupts? and why should my brother's be a less respectable case? Will you only reckon with me how many kings of France have been insolvent?"

"But, prince, your brother is not a king!"

"True, but he is a Rohan!"

"Well!"

"Well! I admire your affected dulness; as if you did not know that to say one is a Rohan is to say——"

Here he stopped and appeared as if seeking some word which might happily explain his meaning. He evidently waited for me to help him out of his difficulty; but I was silent, as much out of spite as from ignorance of what could possibly be synonymous with "a Rohan." "However," resumed prince Louis, "the bankruptcy of my brother cannot fail of giving a vast idea throughout Europe of the importance and credit of our house."

"I leave you to draw all the comfort and advantage you can from the circumstance," said I; "meanwhile it is the earnest desire of your uncle, the prince de Soubise, that, considering the present state of affairs, you should, in some degree, diminish the splendour of your retinue, in order to satisfy some of his most clamorous creditors."

"My dear madam," exclaimed the cardinal, "do let us talk of something else; you forget that when one comes of a princely race, it is imperatively necessary to keep up a fitting state and show; rank would be nothing without its externals."

I was again defeated, as I had been with the archbishop of Cambray. His royal highness could not conceive a Rohan without suite, pomp, and retinue, whims, caprices, jewels, and mistresses. He did, however, give up to his brother certain portions of his revenues, but he could not carry his fraternal affection so far as to deprive himself of any share of his outward show and state.

I could not conceive how a prince could prefer ostentation and splendour to the preservation of the honour of his family. This overcare to keep up appearances, might, perhaps, be commendable in the upstarts of yesterday, who, mistrusting their newly

acquired greatness, seek to dazzle the eyes of the multitude, and conceal the rags they lately wore under the gaudy trappings of recently purchased honours; and these mere pretenders may be found among high and low. Perhaps the recollection of how recent a date he could boast for his own greatness, made prince Louis more tenacious how he gave up any of those external marks of rank and eminence he judged indispensable to save the princes of the blood from being confounded with the canaille.

I gave an account to M. de Soubise of the manner in which I had executed my double charge. He was at first very angry at the apathetic indifference of his nephews, and ended by exactly imitating their conduct.

Among those who were most active in censuring this family was M. de Reynière; his father, an ancient farmer-general, had sprung from the lowest grade of society, but from one fortunate circumstance or another, had attained the post of *administrateur général des postes*, with a fortune worthy of Crœsus; while his wife, whom he had married from the noble family of Jarente, daily made him feel her excessive condescension in deigning to become the wife of a plain individual like himself. Indeed, so far did she carry her contempt for the family of her husband, that she carefully abstained from either seeing them or mentioning their name; while her son, a regular philosopher, by no means flattered with this coolness for his paternal relations, used every possible exertion to make them known to the numerous guests who nightly filled the splendid salons of madame de la Reynière, to the inexpressible vexation and discomfiture of the lady.

Among other whimsical ideas which crossed the brain of this genius, was that of giving a supper after the fashion of a funeral feast, under pretext of doing honour to the late mademoiselle Quinault. The following is an exact description of this singular entertainment.

The fête took place on the 1st of February, 1783; the notes of invitation were in the form of the most

expensive summons to attend funerals; only instead of death's heads they were ornamented with gaping mouths; on them was written,

"You are requested to attend the funeral ceremony of a sister feeder, which will be given on the 1st of February, by Balthazar Grimrod de la Reynière, Esq., barrister at law, dramatic correspondent to the Neufchâtel Journal, in his house in the Champs Elysées; the company will assemble at 9 o'clock, and the supper take place at 10. You are further requested not to bring any servants with you, as proper attendants will be supplied in sufficient numbers. A plentiful *spread* is promised. You are desired to bring this note, otherwise you will not be admitted."

Upon entering the hall of the mansion appointed for the celebration of this singular fête the visitor was stopped by a Swiss, who inquired if he were going to the house of M. de la Reynière, *the oppressor of the people*, or M. de la Reynière, *the defender of the people*; and after being answered that the latter was the person sought, he turned down a corner of the card presented, and motioned you on to a place fitted up to resemble a guard-house, in which were several armed men; by these you were ushered into another chamber, where stood a ferocious-looking figure dressed in complete armour, with his vizor down, and his dagger by his side; by him a second fold was made in another corner of the invitation billet, and the visitor to whom it was addressed was introduced into a second apartment, where a man, habited in the dress of a judge, put many questions to you upon your business in that place, your name, calling, and abode, of all of which he wrote down a formal account; then, having examined your note, he introduced you into the hall set apart for the reception of the company; immediately upon his entrance two persons, hired for the purpose, and dressed like choristers, began perfuming him from golden censers.

The number of the guests amounted to twenty-two,

two of whom were women dressed in male attire; from this assembling hall the party proceeded to cross a dark chamber, when, all at once, a curtain rose and discovered the banqueting-hall. In the midst stood a large table covered with a large velvet pall, and surmounted by black draperies, while the room was hung with the same funeral colour, enlivened by nearly 300 large wax-tapers. The visitors were invited to sit down to table, at which an elegant supper awaited them. The repast was splendid, consisting of nine courses, the last of which consisted wholly of pork, dressed in various ways. At its conclusion, M. de la Reynière inquired how his friends approved of it? A general chorus of "excellent, most excellent," having been returned, the host continued, "Gentlemen, this last course you are pleased so greatly to admire, was prepared by such a person, who keeps a porkshop in such a street, and is a cousin of my father's."

After supper came several sallads dressed with oils in every possible way. Here again the modern Amphytrion wished to have the opinion of his friends, and, when satisfied that they unanimously styled it good, he answered, "This oil you are good enough to praise, came from such a person, a grocer, living in such a street, and he is the cousin of my father."

In this way did the master of the entertainment contrive to introduce his relations until his banquet was exhausted as well as the patience of its visitors. Around the hall ran a gallery destined for those spectators who were desirous of enjoying the *coup d'œil* of this fête, M. de la Reynière having distributed upwards of 300 tickets for the purpose; those obtaining them were admitted to a certain hour, but only permitted to walk round, nor was his uncle, the abbé de Jarente, allowed greater liberty.

The comte de Mirabeau, whose country-houses were the royal prisons, whose whole life was passed in opposing his father, the ministers, the foreign courts, his relations, and judicial authorities at home, in one of his

excursions to Paris, demanded, and obtained, an introduction to me. I was accustomed to his extraordinary countenance, and could but wonder how, in the midst of so irregular a life, and more frequently associating with bad company than good, he had been able to preserve the easy graceful bearing of one who had never breathed any other air than that of a court. He was said to be bold and insolent towards his own sex, and even gross and disgusting in any excess in which he partook; but with females no traces of these vices were to be seen; and he had all the passionate devotion and enthusiastic gallantry of an ancient paladin.

Among the packet of letters I daily received was one written by some anonymous correspondent, perhaps the thousandth of this description which reached me. I was weak enough to read all these productions, and then to grieve over the insults many of them contained; the one to which I allude, however, did not come within this description; it purported to come from "A friend," who warned me that the comte de Mirabeau had wagered with four of his friends that he would, without the slightest effort on his part, make me desperately in love with him, without his having the least desire to excite such a passion.

This intimation amused me greatly, for although the count had evinced his usual gallantry of manner towards me, there was nothing direct or explicit in his attentions, and I could not imagine why he should seek to inspire me with a sentiment which was not reciprocal; upon the whole I looked upon the intelligence as a mere joke, although it filled me with a lively desire to see the count again, that I might be better enabled to judge of the accuracy of my information.

A week passed away, and M. de Mirabeau did not make his appearance; at last a note, traced by the same hand as the former, acquainted me that I should receive a visit from the count on the following day,

when he would commence his course of seduction. Well, said I to myself, it will be my fault should he succeed in his schemes, forewarned should be forearmed.

I had not been misinformed; the comte de Mirabeau arrived on the day mentioned, and I could easily perceive in the sound of his voice, his glance, and every action, that my correspondent had not imposed upon my credulity. He was more gallant, more assiduous, and without all at once entering upon the subject of his love, amply evinced his having now commenced the part he meant to play; his hard-featured face and thick, rough hair, rendered him by no means an object likely to win a lady's heart; besides, I knew his usual habits of libertinism, and how ungratefully he had behaved towards a young and lovely woman, the tale of whose wrongs had reached my ear, and I therefore fully resolved, for every reason, to humour his plot until it should have arrived at completion, and then to dismiss him with the reproof he merited.

It was not long before I again had the honour of his company, when he more explicitly spoke of love, to my great amusement; for having the key to this flame I resolved to fight him with his own weapons; yet how shall I be able to make myself understood, when I confess that all these wise resolutions melted into air, and I fell as completely into his snares as he could have wished me? Alas! often when listening to his overpowering eloquence, I have raised my eyes to his coarse and deeply seamed physiognomy, the words of Isabel have recurred to my recollection, and I have fully comprehended her comparison of the bird attracted, spite of itself, by the wily fascination of the serpent. The moment Mirabeau had quitted me my security returned, and I laughed at the bare idea of yielding to his influence, and, forewarned as I was, I triumphantly defied his power; but no sooner did I find myself in his society than I forgot all the excellent advice I had received, all my own determinations and

resolves, and, spell-bound, continued to advance into the magic circle marked out for me. None, indeed, but those who have seen and heard this wonderful man when he particularly aimed at pleasing, can form the least notion of his powers of captivation; one day that he was pressing his suit with an ardour which effectually beat down all my good resolutions, finding myself in danger of being utterly defeated, as a last resource, I ran to my escrutoire, and drew from thence the two anonymous letters, which, with an impetuous haste, I flung before him. He perused them with a calm air, which I deemed somewhat affected; then, laying them down, said, with a contemptuous smile,

"May I inquire, what is your opinion concerning the contents of these scrawls?"

"That you are a base deceiver, and that I am but too fortunate in having learnt to know it ere too late to profit by the information."

"And these papers teach you all this, do they, madam? Now, then, listen to me; the author of them is one of my oldest, though, perhaps, not best friends. Here, madam," continued he, with a frankness wholly unusual to him, "at the risk even of forfeiting your regard, I will inform you who is the writer of these letters."

So saying, he drew from his pocket-book two papers carefully wrapped up, which I soon recognised as the originals of my anonymous correspondence. These letters were in the hand-writing of the count. Surprised, I hastily demanded an explanation.

"Madam," said Mirabeau, with the most inconceivable coolness, "I loved you, and wished to gain time, that I might inspire you with reciprocal sentiments. You fancied yourself so secure in the warning you received, that you quite omitted taking the necessary precautions to defend your heart, and, consequently, gave me all the advantage I desired.

"This," exclaimed I, indignantly, "is a vile imposition."

"Call it a mere *ruse de guerre.*"

"A positive deception!"

Mirabeau smiled, and merely answered that, so he had secured his object, it mattered very little by what means it had been effected.

No sooner was I left alone than the particulars I had just learned rose before me in their most glaring and offensive light, and I determined instantly to signify to the count my fixed resolve not again to admit him to my presence; but the pen dropped from my fingers, for after all, said I, 'twas but a venial offence, and I was perhaps to blame to think anything about it.

On the following day I received a letter from the count, which I only regret I cannot transcribe here, but I lost it with several others from the same person, many of those of Louis XV., and various other persons of eminence.

A servant, whom I had recently taken into my service, happening to enter my chamber when I was enclosing, in a beautiful little cabinet of ivory and ebony, several papers of importance and letters I valued greatly, imagined that, no doubt, the casket contained jewels and other treasures. He carefully observed the place in which I deposited it, and that same night it disappeared, without my being able since to discover any traces of either thief or casket.

The first letter of Mirabeau bewildered my understanding, the second and third completely turned my brain. Never did lover express himself with so burning a passion; it seemed as though each line had been traced by a pen dipped in the fiery lava of a volcano. Mirabeau was not the man to employ the ordinary forms of expression, and in writing as well as speaking, made use of those bold and magical words which now command such breathless attention in the assembly. Could I then have foreseen that such a meeting would have existed in France, I should easily have pointed out Mirabeau as the eloquent man whose dangerous sophistries would place him at the head of

it. Now his aim is to overturn a throne; but, in the period of which I speak, his ambition pointed but at laying siege to a female heart; and I may as well confess that victory attended his efforts, for, without knowing how or wherefore, I fell a passive victim to this all-fascinating wooer, with no other distinct idea but that of yielding to a power too superior to admit of resistance.

One singular thing is, that I was the only female on whom Mirabeau bestowed his notice whose name and history he did not publish; but, on the contrary, he seemed anxious to cover our *liaison* with an air of mystery; and I believe that had he made known the secret of our connection, he would have converted me into the lawful widow of the late king of France.

One of his delights in our private meetings was to make me relate all I knew of the domestic life of Louis XV., and I must own that I was less discreet with him than I had been with monsieur touching various secrets of the state. I now sometimes repent of having placed such confidence when I see this powerful enemy of the throne raise his voice in loud and powerful declamations against the grandson of Louis XV.

CHAPTER XX.

Opinion of Mirabeau respecting the strength of the monarchy—His infidelity betrayed by the baron de Sugère—Extraordinary rupture —The fortunate *garde du corps*.

In 1783 Mirabeau had already determined upon endeavouring to subvert the reigning government.

"You have seen," would he sometimes say to me, "the tottering state of the monarchy; I will now give you the spectacle of its regeneration; king, kingdom, ministers, and administration shall all be broken to pieces, remodelled, and set up afresh."

"My dear count," said I, "you forget the Bastille."

"The Bastille shall be razed to the ground."

I laughed at this prediction; but I remembered it with a painful consciousness the other evening as I passed by the site of this once formidable prison, and (superstitious creature that I am) I almost expected to see the colossal figure of my prophet elevate itself proudly upon the ruins of this dreadful place.

But instead of painting M. de Mirabeau such as he really was, let me rather describe him as he displayed himself to me and others, that is to say, as one far more occupied in the pursuit of pleasure than in reforming the state, had not some chance words dropped in the intimacy of friendship revealed his ulterior purposes. Our acquaintance, however, soon terminated, from the intervention of the baron de Sugère. That worthy mischief-making character called on me one day, and, after some preliminary conversation, said,

"Are you in the constant habit of seeing the comte de Mirabeau?"

"No," answered I, "I see him occasionally, not often."

"I wish you could find out who is that young and lovely Dutchwoman to whom he seems so devoted, yet so mysteriously careful in concealing his acquaintance."

"Is she so beautiful?"

"Oh, charming! Nothing can equal the tenderness of the count towards this fair incognita; in the morning he escorts her to the gardens of the Tuilleries, spending whole hours in promenading with her the most retired walks; and in the evening they visit the opera, sitting always in a private box; nobody can discover her name, and, really, my dear countess, you will be the saving of many of us who are nearly dying with curiosity if you can learn so important a fact; besides, we are all interested in knowing who has been elevated to the honour of succeeding the unfortunate Sophie."

I endeavoured to conceal my vexation in the presence of the baron, but, during the whole of his visit, my mind was revolving the best method of obtaining a view of the rival whose superior charms had deprived me of the homage of so exalted a lover as M. de Mirabeau.

I returned to Paris early the next morning, and, accompanied by Geneviève, went in search of the faithless lover, whose perfidy I determined to resent. Poor Geneviève was now suffering severely with the fatal complaint which so shortly after deprived me of her, and, by the advice of her physicians, was in the constant habit of walking out early in the morning. I determined upon accompanying her, in the hopes of discovering the rival M. de Sugère had pointed out to me; but although we daily frequented the spot described, yet it was not till the second week of our research we encountered the desired objects. One morning, weary of perpetually traversing the same walks, we struck into a by-path communicating with a small alcove, where Geneviève, who was weak and languid, expressed a desire to rest herself. As I approached, I perceived a lady and gentleman descending

the steps, as though the approach of strangers had disturbed them, and from the feeble and unsteady gait of the gentleman, I easily recognised the comte de Mirabeau; the female with him was doubtless my rival, and, filling with pride and indignation at the idea, I advanced with a hasty pace to meet my treacherous lover. Mirabeau, whose quick glance easily discovered who I was, stood still at my approach, and, with a profound bow, made many polite inquiries respecting my health and that of Geneviève, and during a space of ten minutes kept up a conversation upon the most indifferent subjects, if, indeed, that could be styled a conversation which was carried on nearly by himself alone. At length he found an opportunity of saying to me, unobserved by the rest of the party, "Restrain yourself, violence will be dangerous; I will see you very shortly and explain everything." Then standing aside, as if to allow me to pursue my walk, he gave his arm to his companion, (who to my distorted fancy seemed most beautiful,) and passed on.

Geneviève, who fully comprehended all that was passing, endeavoured, by gentle force, to withdraw me from a spot to which my feet and looks seemed rivetted; I suffered her to lead me to my carriage with the passiveness of an infant; and when we were seated, she desired the coachman to drive round the boulevards, in order to give me time to recover from the bitter grief into which I had fallen.

I really shuddered at the sight of my own countenance when I returned home and surveyed my swollen features in a mirror; I felt sick at heart, and sufficiently indisposed to warrant my giving orders for being denied to every one. The news of my illness brought a crowd of inquiring friends to my door, and my faithful Geneviève, who had planted herself as a sentinel, had sufficient employment in saving me from the importunities of those whose visits were dictated by a mere spirit of curiosity. Towards evening the

guilty cause of all my trouble arrived; he expressed no surprise at finding me so ill, but still I could read in his countenance a sort of regret for the part he had acted.

"You went out early this morning, madam," said he.

"And gained much information from my walk," answered I.

"You were wrong in acting as you have done, and one consequence is the state to which you have reduced yourself. May I inquire whether you expected to see me?"

"I did."

"And you call it honourable, perhaps, to turn spy and watch my actions?"

"Stay, sir," cried I, indignantly; "do not insult me by supposing that I could stoop to such meanness; from others who accidentally encountered you, and who related the fact of your having been seen in certain places, and with a certain companion, I learned more than I could ever have wished to know."

"The marplot to whom I stand indebted for supplying you with all this information," exclaimed M. de Mirabeau, calmly, "is no other than the baron de Sugère. I remember I met him at the Pont Tournant, and the same evening I observed him fidgetting about on his seat at the opera for more than an hour, vainly trying to obtain a view into the box in which I sat."

"It matters little through what channel the intelligence reaches me so that it be correct."

"I do not deny its accuracy," returned the count, "but why did you not spare yourself the trouble you have taken by applying to me for any further particulars you might be desirous of obtaining?"

"Apply to you!" said I, "do I hear aright?"

"Yes, I repeat it; why not demand of me to satisfy your curiosity? I should have deceived you; you would have treated the whole affair as a mere fabrica-

tion of the baron's, and in a little time I should have ceased to care for the female who has excited your apprehensions."

I burst into an agony of tears at this new and mortifying manner of qualifying his desertion.

"My dear countess," continued he, "why afflict yourself; just let us suppose we have been no more than friends, that love has never been mentioned between us. Adieu! my conscience accuses me of no intentional mischief. Our affections are not always under our own control; but I see I distress you, so once more, farewell. I will see you again when you are more calm."

"Let me beseech of you," cried I, "as the last favour you can do me, to ease me of all further dread of seeing such a monument of treacherous perfidy by promising me never again to presume so far as to enter these doors."

"Willingly, madam," replied the count, "the *congé* is given in a manner worthy of you, and, with many thanks, I accept it;" so saying, and with a low bow, the comte de Mirabeau quitted the chamber, leaving me petrified at his effrontery and *sang froid*.

Still, I could not bring myself to believe all was over between us, and hourly waited in anxious expectation of seeing him, but day after day passed away without his either coming or writing; when, all at once, I learned from a hundred different channels that the count had left Paris, taking with him a beautiful female from Holland, of whom he was said to be deeply enamoured. This news dissolved the charm which had bound me to Mirabeau, and I now congratulated myself that, thanks to the mystery observed during our acquaintance, my name was not likely to be mixed up with his. I breathed more freely when I knew him to be at a distance; there had been a sort of dread mixed up with my tenderest feelings, and my heart seemed to throw off an oppressive load in freeing itself from the enthralment Mirabeau had cast around me. With my tranquillity

my health and good looks returned, and the year would have passed away happily and prosperously but for the loss of my excellent Geneviève, who died at this period, to my sincere regret and unfeigned sorrow. She had never lived with me under any other title than that of my friend, and I wept for her as though she had been every relation in one.

I felt more than ever the necessity of seeking some distraction from my sorrow, and even now, my friend, I find the topic too afflicting to dwell upon.

The attention of the Parisians was at this time divided between the disappointment caused by a severe miscarriage which befell her majesty, and the very unusual line of conduct pursued by the duchesse de Polignac on the occasion. The queen had been (according to long-established custom) spending the autumn of 1783 at Fontainbleau, when, on the 3d of November, she met with an accident, which destroyed her hopes of giving another prince to France. The distressing intelligence was quickly carried to La Muette, where the governess of the children of France then was with her illustrious pupils, and her ardent affection for her royal mistress would not permit her to remain at a distance during a time of sickness and sorrow to her august mistress, while etiquette peremptorily forbade the person intrusted with so precious a charge leaving it for one day, nor was the preceptress ever permitted to quit her royal pupils upon any pretext. Madame de Polignac gave herself very little concern about these rules and regulations, but immediately dispatched the following letter.

"Sire,—I must implore your majesty's forgiveness for hastening to Fontainbleau, to endeavour, by every means in my power, to alleviate the sufferings of my beloved mistress and adored queen, of whose fatal mischance I have just heard with the deepest sympathy and sorrow. I know how deeply I am transgressing, yet I find it utterly impossible to resist the earnest longings of my heart. Should you, sire, deem my

absence incompatible with the duties of my office as preceptress to the children of France, I conjure your majesty to grant me my dismissal; and, be assured, whatever may be your decision, my gratitude for past favours will know no diminution.

"I have the honour to be, &c., &c."

Two hours after this letter had been sent off, the duchess herself was on the road to Fontainbleau, where she arrived wholly unexpected. However surprised others might have been at this proceeding, the queen was perfectly delighted with it; such a mark of devotion appeared to her above all praise. The evil wishers of madame de Polignac would fain have availed themselves of the present opportunity to injure her in the estimation of his majesty; and many, envious of her power, sought to persuade Louis XVI. to punish her by granting the dismissal prayed for; but the excellent-hearted prince turned a deaf ear to all these insidious counsellors, saying, goodnaturedly, "No, no, that will never do; were I to dismiss madame de Polignac now, it would only be to reappoint her in less than a month; but I will lecture her well."

Even this last promise was forgotten, and madame de Polignac having slept one night at Fontainbleau, returned the following day to La Muette. This bold attempt to break through the rules of etiquette was greatly applauded by many, while some of the old nobility expressed themselves much scandalized at so flagrant a violation of its commands. I must here relate to you a little anecdote, my dear friend, in which I flatter myself I exercised a degree of prudence which calls for some share of praise.

A letter reached me about the period I am mentioning, written by a young person who described herself as being related to the royal family, whose signature she adopted, entreating my aid and assistance, and praying to be admitted into my family as *femme de chambre.* I was perfectly staggered by the request, which I concluded to be merely an attempt to

entrap me into some intrigue, and I therefore returned a polite negative to the latter demand, saying, that I did not feel myself of sufficient rank and consequence to presume so far as to receive into my service a person belonging to the royal family, enclosing, at the same time, four louis to relieve the present wants of my unknown correspondent, which, by their not being returned, I presume were accepted.

I at first resolved upon mentioning the affair to the king, but my sister-in-law, whom I consulted upon the subject, strenuously dissuaded me from so doing. I could not rest, however, till I had made some private inquiries as to who this princess in distress could be, who boasted of so illustrious a name, and I learned that she was both young, pretty, and unfortunate, and was indebted to madame de Boulainvilliers for a home and protection; that she declared herself to be a descendant from Henry II., and, in consequence of so brilliant an ancestry, she added to her paternal name of Saint Remy that of Valois. All these particulars confirmed me in the idea that the young lady would be a very dangerous inmate, and I heartily congratulated myself on having declined her offers. I subsequently learned that she had espoused the comte de la Motte, and from that period I lost sight of her, until I again met with her in an affair in which she acted an important part.

In the following year, 1784, a *garde du corps*, handsome enough, but merely the son of a post-master at Barbezieux, drew all eyes upon him by the style and luxury he all at once launched into, a manner of living equally unbefitting both his rank and fortune; from inhabiting a humble lodging, he was all at once seen with a magnificent house, establishment of servants, horses, carriages, liveries, everything, in fact, he could have possessed had he been the first nobleman at court. Nothing could exceed the pride and haughtiness with which he bore his new honours; for three years things went on in the same manner; and the newly-

made gentleman carried his audacity so far as to throw out insinuations against the sacred and irreproachable reputation of the first lady in the kingdom; scornfully returning the contempt of the noble family of Angoulême, who refused to admit him into their society on account of the meanness of his extraction, by repeating, "It is very little matter whether I am received here or no, their betters are not so difficult of access, and high-born dames elsewhere are but too happy of my company:" and by a thousand inuendoes did this contemptible wretch insinuate what his tongue would never have dared to utter.

Paris was soon filled with these injurious tales, and I believe I may give myself credit for being nearly the only person who refused to give credit to them. Henriette, who, of course, was acquainted with what was in every person's mouth, said to me one evening, while undressing me,

"Madam, I have discovered the name of M. Desgranges' friend and protector."

I must tell you Desgranges was the name of the *corps du garde,* whose rapid accession of fortune I have been describing.

"Indeed," replied I; "and are you sufficiently sure of your information to venture to give up the name of the lady patroness?"

"Oh, yes, madam; and it is in the hope that by making known the truth, an end may be put to the numerous slanders afloat that I am induced to tell it you. There is, madam, at Versailles a certain old lady named Elban, possessed of a princely income, which she spends, not among company that would be a credit to her, but upon the lowest associates, such as females of the most abandoned class, swindlers, pickpockets, sharpers, half-starved, superannuated officers, and handsome *gardes du corps,* for whom she has a remarkable fancy; M. Desgranges is at present her prime favourite, and she it is who supplies him

with the necessary funds for keeping up his present greatness."

"But how comes it that so much mystery is observed? I should have expected that the lady would have been too proud of her conquest to have kept it to herself, and I am equally surprised her lover should have been so discreet. However, if I may depend upon what you say, I will take care that an august name shall no longer be associated in so base a business."

"I heard it, madam," replied Henriette, "from the *femme de chambre* of madame Elban, who called on me yesterday to see if I could do anything for her sister, who is in want of a situation."

I dismissed Henriette, and then sat down to wonder at the ease with which falsehood and calumny are propagated. Early the following day the maréchale de Mirepoix paid me a visit, and to her I related what I had heard from Henriette; she shrugged up her shoulders, and merely replied,

"This version of the tale will never do."

"But if it be true?"

"No matter for that, my dear, no person will believe it."

"Surely, you cannot credit the vile calumnies we have lately heard?"

"My good countess, I am as well persuaded as yourself of their falsity, but every one would laugh in my face were I to attempt to destroy the marvellous tale so eagerly received at court."

"Such are courtiers," said I, with a sigh, "thank God, I have no longer any acquaintance with them."

CHAPTER XXI.

The baron de Sugère and his revolutionary principles—The chevalier de Boufflers and his songs—Cagliastro at Paris—Hopes of prince Louis de Rohan—The diamond necklace—First representation of *The Marriage of Figaro*—Comte de Haga at Paris—The odd shoes.

THE maréchale de Mirepoix was not the only person who laughed at the easy credulity with which I believed whatever was told me. The baron de Sugère went so far as to say,

"Is it possible you do not perceive that this madame d'Elban, a person whom nobody ever heard of before, is merely a sort of scape-goat to save the reputation of another? and I do not scruple to declare that in my opinion, a most worthy person is scandalized just to hide the frailty of one whose high station protects her; but, however this may be, have a care how you render yourself odious by undertaking the defence of those it is utterly impossible you can feel any regard for."

"For heaven's sake, baron," cried I, "do not express such sentiments before me; how can I possibly injure myself by refusing to believe a vile calumny?"

"I tell you, madame la comtesse, you will be blamed, and justly too as I think; things have arrived at a crisis in which some decided change must take place, and the nobility will make a desperate effort to regain their lost rights. There are two means by which this may be accomplished, one is to reduce the royal authority within its ancient limits, and the other to take back from the clergy those immense domains which the folly of our predecessors lavished upon them; now, to bring this about, we must begin by bringing the throne into disrepute, by casting a sort of stigma upon all near it, by decrying splendid establish-

ments, and all the craft of priesthood. Thank heaven, our philosophers take all the latter care off our hands; the nation is daily becoming more and more enlightened, and, ere long, we shall accomplish all our desires."

The baron de Sugère in thus descanting upon the coming storm was but the echo of others more formidable than himself when under the influence of such sentiments; a revolution was most ardently desired by every class in the nation, saving the high clergy; by the court it was desired as a means of getting rid of their debts and overthrowing the old parliament, by the nobility in the hopes of recalling the feudal system, and by the nation as the only chance of remedying their enormous abuses.

Thanks to the protectors of M. Desgranges, he had risen to the highest rank at Versailles; he was gentleman in ordinary to a prince, and captain of cuirassiers, when his well-merited punishment befell him; he was arrested and confined in a state prison, where he had abundant leisure to lament his former vain boastings.

It was about this period I formed an acquaintance with the chevalier de Boufflers, a great friend to the house of Beauvau, and, consequently, the frequent visitor of the maréchale de Mirepoix. He was a delightful poet; his verses breathed a soul, a grace, a fire, which rendered them perfectly delicious;, do you recollect ever to have seen some he wrote in 1784, called *Mon Rêve?* They were universally admired at court and elsewhere; I will give you a copy of them, if only to convey to you some idea of the manners of the time I am describing:—

Pourquoi ne puis-je pas le croire?
  Ah! que n'est-ce la vérité,
Ce que tous deux, dans l'ombre noir,
  Tour à tour nous avons été!
Morphée en fermant ma paupière,
  Fit de moi l'acier le plus doux,
D'aimant vous étiez une pierre,
  Et m'entraînez auprès de vous.

Ce dieu, par un beau stratagème,
De cet aimant fit un écho,
J'étais couplet, je disais j'aime,
Et vous me repétiez ce mot.
Par un caprice plus indigne,
Je me trouvai petit poisson,
A mes yeux vous parûtes ligne,
Et je mordis à l'hameçon.

Le bon Morphée à ma prière,
M'ayant voyager par eau,
Vous devîntes une rivière,
Et je vous fit porter bateau;
Le froid prit vous, voilà de glace,
Pour tirer parti de ce tour,
Sur deux semelles je pris place
Et je patinai tout le jour.

Pour dernière métamorphose,
Devenu nectar le plus doux,
J'étais dans un vase de rose
Du vin, et je coulais pour vous,
Une goutte sur vous s'attache,
Mais j'ai cherché l'étoffe en vain.

The chevalier de Boufflers had for his rival the chevalier de Parny, who was said by many to be more of a poet and less of a libertine than the former; for my own part, I must say that the elegies of M. de Parny have always deeply touched my heart; to my fancy it is impossible to paint the passion of love with a more exquisite sensibility or a more graceful truth. These charming productions were violently attacked by M. de la Harpe, La Marmontel, and Saint Lambert, who scowled at a work in which, as they said, philosophy had no share. I never understood the exact meaning of their critique, nor do I believe they knew much more themselves. M. de Parny did not meet with the same success which attended M. de Boufflers, but that was a natural consequence of the difference in their worldly

conditions. The latter was, in a manner, domiciled at court, while the former had never been within its magic precincts; de Boufflers had all the advantage of birth, family, and connections, and the admiring smiles of his female readers were bestowed as much upon the man of rank and fashion as the poet. It is said, and I think with much truth, that a writer of elevated rank may always start with a reputation ready made to his hand; the critics dare scarcely attack one who writes himself my lord or right honourable; the crowd admire before they know what they are praising, and if the noble author have but a moderate share of common sense, he is lauded to the skies as a genius. I must give you another poem written by the chevalier de Boufflers, as a concluding specimen of the versatile powers of this clever man. Admitted into the first circles, and flattered by the notice bestowed on him by the queen, he was the life of every party; her majesty, to whom he had addressed several complimentary verses, said to him upon one occasion,

"Monsieur le chevalier, I am weary of being perpetually praised; could you not by way of change, tell me of some of my faults?"

"Ah, madam, have you any?"

"Yes, many; have you sufficient sincerity, chevalier, to lay them before my eyes?"

"How can I describe what I do not see?"

"Nay, nay, chevalier," said Marie Antoinette, good-humouredly, "you do know well enough that the subject I have proposed may prove a most fruitful one for your verse. In a word, I am weary of perpetual adulation, and would fain see how I should like the reverse of the picture; so now, under pain of my heaviest displeasure, I command you to satirize my faults and failings with all the severity of which your pen is capable."

"Your majesty shall be obeyed," said de Boufflers, "and I trust you will not have to complain of being flattered upon this occasion."

"Be it so, chevalier," replied the queen; "and for once in my life let me hear the language of sincerity."

The obedient poet bowed and retired, and the following day appeared before her majesty with the following stanzas, entitled,

Les Défauts de Thémire.

Voulez-vous savoir les "on dits,"
Qui courent sur Thémire?
On dit que parfois son esprit
Parait être en délire;
Quoi! de bonne foi?
Oui! mais croyez-moi,
Elle sait si bien faire,
Que sa déraison,
Fussiez-vous Caton,
Aurait l'art de vous plaire.

On dit que le trop de bons sens
Jamais ne la tourmente;
On dit même qu'un grain d'encens,
La ravit et l'enchante;
Quoi! de bonne foi?
Oui! mais croyez-moi,
Elle sait si bien faire,
Que même les dieux,
Descendraient des cieux,
Pour l'encenser sur terre.

Vous donne-t-elle un rendezvous
De plaisir ou d'affaire,
On dit qu'oublier l'heure et vous
Pour elle c'est misère;
Quoi! de bonne foi?
Oui! mais croyez-moi,
Se révoit ou près d'elle,
Adieu, tous ses torts,
Le temps même alors,
S'envole à tue d'ailes.

Sans l'égoïsme rien n'est bon,
C'est là sa loi suprême,
Aussi s'aime-t-elle, dit-on,
D'une tendresse extrême;
Quoi! de bonne foi?
Oui! mais croyez-moi,
Laissez-lui son système,
Peut-on la blâmer,
De savoir aimer,
Ce que tout le monde aime.

A cry of general admiration was heard as these ingenious couplets were read; the courtiers eagerly sought a copy, and, in a short time, nothing else was talked of at Paris or Versailles; and while some repeated them from the pleasure of offering such delicate homage to the queen, others read them for the sake of enjoying the skill and address with which her imperfections were described; in fact, for nearly a fortnight, the chevalier de Boufflers became the object of universal attention.

As nearly as I can recollect, it was about this time that Cagliastro returned to Paris, or rather acknowledged his being in that city; for I believe he had been residing in it for some time previous, practising upon the credulity of another of his dupes, M. Duval d'Espremenil, who received the doctrines of this impostor with a warmth and zeal worthy of one who had before been equally devoted to the mysteries of Mesmer.

Cagliastro was accompanied by his wife, a very pretty woman, who could speak little French, but was admirably calculated to sit still and be admired. He now appeared with vast pomp and state, declaring himself to be chief of the red-cross knights or illuminati; he brought with him fresh particulars relative to the connection of the inhabitants of the earth with the elementary genii scattered throughout infinite space; had possessed himself of the elixir of immortality, and scorned the low-born and vulgar idea of making gold

by the means of the philosopher's stone. Prince Louis announced his arrival to me with a sort of emphasis which startled me; begging of me to receive Cagliastro, or, at least, to see him again at the house of any third person, but I was inflexible.

"You are wrong," said he to me, "Cagliastro is a man of the deepest science, from which I shall derive the greatest advantages."

"For which, take my word for it, you will pay dearly, prince."

"No, no," answered prince Louis, "you are quite mistaken; believe me, I shall gain much more than I can lose; for already," pursued the cardinal, with an air of satisfaction, "my star begins to shine more propitiously, my prospects are improving, and I have every reason to expect that the queen will speedily relieve me of the heavy load her displeasure casts upon me. Is it not most cruel to remove me from the head of affairs without any plausible reason for so doing? Why should not *I* be prime minister? Nothing prevents my attaining that so much desired dignity, but her majesty's dislike to me, and I have now every chance of overcoming that prejudice, and that too before long."

The air of confidence with which prince Louis expressed himself excited my unfeigned surprise.

"You have, then, great reasons for hoping a speedy change in the present situation of your affairs," said I.

"For hoping!" interrupted the cardinal; "nay, I have the certainty that it will be so; and, I repeat, a genie favourable to the house of Rohan watches over my fortunes."

"Alas," said I, "if that be all your dependence 'tis but a feeble one. I see now that Cagliastro has inspired you with these hopes, by promising you the aid of one of his elementary genii, or, perhaps, made you a present of a bottle imp."

"Lay aside your raillery, I conjure you, dear countess," replied prince Louis, "and be assured I speak

not without good reason; I have found upon this terrestrial world what I need to make my peace with the queen, that is, a person possessed of the necessary influence, both ready and willing to set me right with her majesty; such an one have I met with, who, admitted at all times to her majesty's presence and private ear, will watch over my interests as if they were her own."

"You are fortunate," returned I; "and this all-powerful person, who may it be?"

"One," answered the prince, "powerless in appearance; nay, whose very existence is scarcely known or cared for, and this makes it so much the better for me; for her influence not being suspected, my enemies have no opportunity of undermining her good work. The queen receives her, (for 'tis a lady I allude to,) regards and consults her; and she has already succeeded in doing away with her majesty's first burst of prejudice against me; I have every reason to expect further good results from her exertions, and, upon the whole, my views are not so chimerical as you seem to consider them."

Nothing more passed between us during this interview, but, when left to myself, I sat down to endeavour to discover who this powerful ally could be on whom the prince so much depended, and my suspicions fell upon madame de Campan, first lady in waiting to the queen; for how, without forming the most unreasonable conjectures, could I have surmised that the comtesse de la Motte Valois was the genius who presided over the good fortune of the cardinal.

A few days had elapsed when the prince again paid me a visit, crying out with animated joy,

"Victoria! my dear countess; I am the happiest of men; her majesty has deigned to reinstate me in her good graces, has read a justificatory memorial which I laid at her feet, has admitted I have been treated unjustly and with a rigour, for which I have her royal promise I shall be indemnified."

"And have you obtained the audience so much desired?"

"Not as yet; her majesty has not favoured me with a private audience, but she has condescended so far as to write to me."

I listened with mingled surprise and unbelief. The prince's account seemed to me to exceed all probability; that the queen should write to one formerly so odious, yet refuse to see him, puzzled me excessively. Could it be that she feared giving offence to those about her by openly countenancing prince Louis? or did she project the formation of a new ministry? how was it that her majesty so decidedly favoured the baron de Breteuil, a person so notorious for his hatred of the cardinal, and yet restored the latter to her good graces? It was in vain I wearied myself with these conjectures; I was compelled perforce to wait until time gave me the clue to this mystery.

When next I met madame de Mirepoix, I inquired whether there was any chance of the cardinal de Rohan's being restored to favour at Versailles?"

"My dear," exclaimed the maréchale, "what a notion! the queen detests the very mention of his name."

"But she might change her opinion respecting prince Louis."

"That she will never do," replied madame de Mirepoix, "while the cardinal continues the same profligate and unprincipled character he is at present. No, no, take my word for it, the wind does not blow favourably for him just now at Versailles."

I said no more, concluding, in my own mind, that possibly the queen might be deceiving the public, and would suddenly and unexpectedly manifest her new preference for the cardinal; I therefore dismissed the affair altogether from my mind until fresh communications on the part of his eminence recalled it to my recollection.

Beaumarchais, who had been for several years en-

deavouring to procure permission to produce his *Marriage of Figaro* on the stage, and who, as I before told you, had to overcome the opposition of both king and clergy, obtained a complete triumph, and his play was performed amid the most enthusiastic plaudits. Never was a piece more rapturously received, nor was ever greater eagerness manifested on the part of the public to witness a first representation. I was fortunate enough to secure a box, and, on the night in question, went attended by madame de Montmorency, the duc de Crillon, and M. de Montmorency, and such was the immense crowd that we were compelled to wait nearly an hour before we obtained admission.

At an early hour in the morning the duchesse de Bourbon had sent her servants for tickets, but although they were awaiting the moment of the opening of the box-office,they could not obtain them even for a princess of the blood-royal.

The moment when the doors were thrown open, was the signal for general confusion; the barriers were broken down, and every precaution taken to prevent the general rush rendered useless in a moment; monsieur, who was the zealous patron of Beaumarchais, was present with the comte d'Artois. The success of the piece was brilliant beyond example, spite of all the cabals and intrigues to prevent it; and Beaumarchais proceeded, without further opposition, to hold up to the derision of the people all they had as yet venerated and regarded. Senseless beings! how little they foresaw that all this license was but the prologue to the horrors of the revolution.

Next morning I addressed a complimentary note to the author, and one of condolence to the baron de Sugère, who, with his natural amability, was perfectly overwhelmed by the good-fortune of his *dear friend.* This spiteful M. de Sugère had awoke in the hopes of hearing that the *Marriage of Figaro* had been completely damned, and the accounts he continued to receive of its favourable reception brought on so severe

a relapse of the illness from which he was beginning to recover, that he was violently ill for many days, and the only thing which restored him was an invitation to distribute various pasquinades in prose and verse, written by those who were equally envious of the success Beaumarchais had met with throughout Paris.

For my own part, I saw with sincere pleasure the advantage Beaumarchais had obtained, and I perceived, with equal satisfaction, that his good fortune was daily increasing. Still his enemies, by a fine stroke of malice, contrived to draw down upon him the bitter displeasure of the queen, by causing it to be circulated that some severe lines in his piece were addressed to her, and by this calumny, converted Marie Antoinette into the oppressor of a man of genius, who well deserved that she should have been his patroness and friend. The comte d'Artois likewise declared against the author of the *Marriage of Figaro*, and further declared, that, in his opinion, an assembly of the States-general would be less prejudicial to the interests of France than this comedy; while, on the other hand, monsieur as vehemently declared that the piece was capable of affording a most excellent lesson which all should take advantage of; and but for his powerful interference, Beaumarchais would have been incarcerated by the aid of a *lettre de cachet*, procured for him by the baron de Breteuil.

However, the lesson so opportunely sent was wholly unheeded by the count Almavivas and the countess Rosinas of the day, and, spite of the mirror which this comedy was said to present of their vices, they looked but amended not, and their lives continued to be passed in the same round of dissipation and folly, if nothing worse.

An accident which befell one of the ladies of honour to a young and innocent princess, called Dr. Barthéz into notice; the lady had unfortunately added to the population without sanctioning such conduct by the dignifying shelter of the marriage tie, and the doctor was applied to to provide for the coming event in such

a manner as to preserve the fair patient from losing either her reputation or her comfortable post at court; and all this the sagacious doctor managed to do with a tact and skilfulness which drew down upon him more business than he could possibly attend to. I knew him well, although I never had sufficient confidence in him to consult him for any illness of my own, and frequently he would treat me with a long description of the system, or relate the mighty cures he had performed, adding, very gravely, that, for his own part, he had not the least belief in the power of medicine. "We are," said he, "like so many blind men striking with a stick either at the disease or the patient, so much the better for the latter should the blow fall upon the malady instead of himself."

Barthéz soon after this became physician to the family of Orleans; I cannot recollect how long he retained his charge, but I believe he lost it at the death of that prince, whom he so cleverly hurried out of the world.

I shall turn from him to the king of Sweden, then travelling incognito under the name of the comte de Haga. He was warmly received by the Parisians, and the reception bestowed by them served in some measure to indemnify him for the haughtiness with which the queen treated him. Spite of her majesty's efforts to conceal her dislike, it was evident that the comte de Haga had found no favour in her eyes, while the king, on the contrary, welcomed him with every demonstration of friendship and esteem; this difference of sentiment caused much perplexity to the courtiers, and produced some very amusing scenes.

This prince visited France quite unexpectedly, and upon the evening of his arrival at Versailles, the king had gone to Rambouillet, where he had invited a party of five and twenty persons to supper. Immediately that the news reached the château at Versailles that his Swedish majesty would wait upon his brother of France that evening, the queen dispatched a courier to

Louis XVI. with the intelligence; the king, with his usual kindness, insisted upon it that the supper should proceed as though nothing unusual had occurred, and then commissioning monsieur to do the honours of the table, he charged him not to let his absence be known until the moment of sitting down to table; this done, and not having any vehicle at hand, he rode to Versailles on horseback, attended merely by a groom, but, upon reaching Versailles, he found that all his retinue, reckoning upon his absence, had taken themselves off; neither keys nor valets were to be found, and he was compelled to have the wardrobes broken open, and to call to his assistance, while making his toilet, the first domestics he could collect together; these, wholly unaccustomed to such duties, performed their parts so ill that when his majesty entered the drawing-room, his feet presented the amusing spectacle of one red and one black shoe.

The moment he appeared an universal laugh was heard, which was, however, soon sobered down by respect into a quiet smile on the part of the courtiers, while the queen, indulging in all the gaiety of her disposition, inquired whether his majesty gave a masquerade that night? or if he proposed exhibiting to comte de Haga the last new French fashion? This incident banished all ceremony, many jokes were passed, and the king observed, as he retired for the night, "I must find out the person who has been the cause of my passing so pleasant an evening, and evince my gratitude in a suitable manner."

The baron de Breteuil, who had formerly been ambassador from France to Sweden, conceived it essential for him to greet the arrival of that prince by a brilliant fête, given in honour of him at Saint Cloud, where luxury and magnificence vied with each other in welcoming the royal guest, whose condescending and gracious manners towards those whom he had known during his previous visit, gained him universal regard and popularity.

CHAPTER XXII.

The comte de Haga's loss of memory—Fête given by the duc de Cossé—Conversation with the king, fatal presages—The king of Sweden at Luciennes—Cardinal de Rohan—His reconciliation with the queen—The famous necklace—The comtesse de la Motte Valois d'Arcis sur Aube—Beaumarchais at Saint Lazare—Death of the duc de Choiseul.

I HAD seen much of the comte de Haga during his former visit to France; he had then behaved towards me with the most gallant attention; but no wonder, for I was then in the height of my power, and could influence the sentiments of Louis XV. in any way I pleased, yet, upon this his second coming, he had not even signified a wish to see me again; he entirely forgot that when the czar Peter had visited France, he deemed it positively incumbent in him to pay his respects to madame de Maintenon; I must confess I was a little piqued at the neglect bestowed on me.

The duc de Cossé, to whom I related my disappointment, told me that he was making preparations for a splendid fête he purposed offering to his Swedish majesty, but that he would immediately countermand it if it was my wish he should do so. "No, no," said I, "let the fête proceed, manage only to procure me the means of seeing this illustrious ingrate without his being conscious of my presence, and I will take my own revenge."

The duke gave me his word my desire should be gratified; he was himself possessed of the most exquisite taste, which, aided by those he employed, produced so magnificent and striking a *coup d'œil*, that the comte de Haga declared that, excepting an entertainment given him by the queen in the gardens of Trianon, he had never seen any thing comparable to that of the

duc de Cossé. The amusements consisted of every delight which could be called into action; I will not take up your time by relating the number and beauty of the transparencies which decorated the grounds, the charming surprises managed so as to present all the charms of *unexpectedness*, the splendid supper, the exquisite fare provided, nor the numberless inventions introduced to contribute to the comfort and enjoyment of the night, whose gloom fled before the brilliant illuminations of at least 100,000 lamps of every gradation of colour, from the most sparkling hues to the softest tint of the rose; suffice it, that art and nature had so combined that the beholder could express no want or wish which was not within his reach.

The guests were all expected to come in fancy dresses, except the principal lords of the court, while a party of the gayest nobles of the day represented, in a part of the gardens appropriated for the purpose, the delights of the carnival of Venice.

This latter amusement had been designed in order that I might take part in it, and, availing myself of the opportunity presented, I approached the royal stranger at the moment when, fatigued with the homage paid him, he had requested the duke to excuse his leaving the festive scene to wander amid the cooling shades of the grounds. I was attired as a Dalecarlian peasant, and this costume, as might naturally be expected, soon caught the eye of Gustavus, who made me a sign to approach.

"I use no ceremony with my own countrywoman," said he; "but how comes it (alluding to my dress) that I find my native garb in the midst of the enchantments of this beautiful place? have you, my good Dalecarlian, any request to prefer? If so, speak, I am here to gratify your wishes."

"They are already gratified," answered I; "my only prayer was to behold a second time the inheritor

of the throne of Gustavus Vasa; my eyes have enjoyed the blessed sight, and I go grateful and happy."

"Have we then met before, fair mask? Tell me, when and where?"

"At Versailles," replied I; "you were then but a hero in anticipation, you have now realized your glorious projects, and, I may venture to say, that I did not throw any obstacle in the way of their accomplishment."

The comte de Haga, starting with surprise, was for a moment silent, and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he said,

"The cares inseparable from royalty give frequent cause for accusing the heart when the memory alone is in fault, and I fear I stand so situated with regard to yourself."

"I am but one of your majesty's humblest subjects."

"Nay, nay, madam, I see it all now, and freely acknowledge my culpable neglect towards one entitled to both my homage and gratitude."

"Oh, sire," said I, "since your majesty vouchsafes to lay aside the mask I will imitate your example, and own that I have condemned you for a want of memory, but never of ingratitude."

"You are too kind, madame la comtesse, but my inexcusable forgetfulness rises fully before me, nor shall I feel at ease until I have solicited your forgiveness at Luciennes."

"That is not necessary," replied I, "the will shall be taken for the deed; but remember that I am now a poor exile and fallen favourite, whose altered fortunes render it unsafe for her to receive any marked attention."

We then entered upon an interesting conversation wholly relative to the past; the count spoke with an expression of serious concern and interest for my happiness, and, giving me his arm, we continued to pace the retired walk in which we had met, while he related to me what fame had partly acquainted me with, and

how, by his energy, he had succeeded in winning back his crown from his nobles.

"And you are now," said I, "triumphant and happy."

"Alas!" replied he, "the Swedish rebels will never pardon me for what I have done, heaven knows, less for myself than for the common good; I am surrounded by traitors and conspirators, whose never-ending plots defy my utmost vigilance."

"Still, the love of your subjects will be your safeguard from all ill," said I.

"But a feeble barrier against the assassin's steel," returned the comte de Haga, bitterly; "remember that Henry IV., the best of your kings, fell by the hand of a regicide."

"Your destiny will be more fortunate," cried I, interrupting him.

"I am in the hands of a merciful Providence, let it do with me as seemeth it best. How enviable is the lot of Louis XVI., he has not to endure the constant dread of falling a victim to hatred and villainy."

"No!" exclaimed I; "neither is so frightful a destiny reserved for you; our gracious sovereign will, like his grandfather, enjoy a long and peaceful reign, and end his days among his faithful and affectionate servants and subjects; and why, prince, should not a similar destiny be yours? Why should not the same fate attend you both?"

"Heaven forbid, for your king's sake, there should be any similarity between us; for, in that case," continued Gustavus, with a melancholy tone and an expression which made me shudder, "he will die a violent and unnatural death! May heaven avert the evil from his head! For long since has it been foretold to me that I should perish by the murderer's hand!"

"Surely your majesty can attach no belief to such an absurd prediction?" said I, striving in vain to speak with an assured voice.

"Did you ever hear mention of Swedenborg?" inquired the comte de Haga.

"Yes," answered I; "he is a sort of illuminati, a mystic maniac."

"This holy, good, and inspired man, this saint upon earth, of a nature purified from the grossness of ours, revealed to me the certainty of my meeting a violent end! Fool that I was to consult him!"

A mysterious terror took possession of me during this conversation, so wholly unexpected, and the contrast between the solemnity of what we were discussing and the sounds of gaiety by which we were surrounded added still more to the effect produced by the king's words; in a moment our solitude was broken in upon by a fresh burst of voices celebrating the brave deeds of the Swedish king, who had been followed into the place where I met with him; and this expedient was hit upon to draw him back to the company, a shower of fire-works sparkled and glittered in the air, nymphs clad in white and garlanded with the freshest flowers, fairies attired in gossamer robes of gold or silver gauze, with a band of armed knights, all came to supplicate the illustrious visitor to return to that fête of which he was the brightest ornament. "Surely," said the prince, "I tread upon enchanted ground; never did I pass so delightful an evening; why, to my distorted vision, should a funeral pall for ever seem to envelope even the decorations of such a banquet?"

Ere I could reply the duc de Cossé and the rest of the court drew near. I hastily withdrew, and Gustavus departed surrounded by his brilliant escort. I could not rally my spirits sufficiently to take any part in the amusements, which now seemed to recommence with more animation than ever; the disclosure so spontaneously made by the prince, who could have had no motive for revealing what appeared to have been dictated by a superior intelligence, acted too powerfully on my mind, and I recalled with equal awe the

menaces of my unknown prophet; and still more what I had beheld in the mirror of the odious Cagliastro.

My meditations were broken in upon by the tolling of a bell of a neighbouring church, betokening the removal of some fellow-creature from this world of trouble and care. Naturally superstitious, you may be sure this circumstance did not tend to tranquillize my spirits; a heavy presentiment came over me, and, like the king of Sweden, it seemed as though a winding-sheet clung to the brilliant pageant on which my aching eyes painfully gazed. Unable to endure the weight which hung over me, I ordered my carriage; and departed with the same secrecy I had come.

M. de Mausabré,* uneasy at my sudden disappearance, came early the following morning to inquire after my health. I had passed a wretched night, and looked quite ugly in consequence; I therefore received him in my bed-room, which was carefully darkened to prevent his perceiving the ravages want of rest had made. He related to me the high encomiums passed by the king of Sweden upon the last night's fête, expressing at the same time the general regret which prevailed at discovering how completely the countenance of his Swedish majesty, towards the conclusion of the evening, lost the happy expression which lit it up at the commencement of the entertainment. Shortly after arrived the duc de Cossé; I thanked him for all his attentions, and expressed my admiration of the gallant and magnificent manner in which he had conducted his fête; the moment we were alone, he inquired of me whether the comte de Haga had spoken with me? I replied in the affirmative without, however, entering

* M. de Mausabré was the last admirer of madame du Barri publicly known as such; and the indifferent manner in which she mentions him can only be ascribed to her desiring to avoid exciting any unpleasant feelings in the mind of M. de V., to whom she addresses her memoirs, and who was greatly attached to her; whether or no this was the case we leave to the sagacity of our readers to determine.—Editor's Note.

into the particulars of all that passed between us, and merely gave him to understand that I had conversed with his Swedish majesty, who no longer appeared culpably negligent.

Two days after this I was informed a stranger desired to see me; as it was not at an hour in which I could fear any danger from so doing, I desired he might be admitted, when, to my great surprise, the comte de Haga entered the room. I was both gratified and surprised by this unexpected visit; after the first compliments had passed, the king of Sweden exclaimed, "Pardon me for intruding thus unannounced, but I have no remedy since the comte de la Mark has taken upon himself to kill my French chamberlain."

I must explain to you that the king had taken in that capacity a native of Lyons, who had formerly served in the regiment of the comte de la Mark, and withdrew from it to prevent sharing the campaign in America. This retreat drew down upon him many unpleasant remarks, many of which tending to implicate his honour were repeated by his late colonel when he saw him in the train of the comte de Haga at Paris. M. Duperron, for so was the chamberlain named, hearing of this, challenged M. de la Mark, and perished by the first fire. His death caused the most lively displeasure in the mind of Gustavus, who, however, forbore to demand justice for it, observing that he was only in France as a private individual, and not as king of Sweden.

Our conversation did not again fall on the dispiriting topics we had discussed the night previous; the past and present occupied all our attention without once recurring to the future; in this manner an hour soon glided away, when my visitor bade me adieu, saying, that he feared his stay in Paris would be too short to admit of his again visiting Luciennes. Nor did I see him after this; he returned to Sweden, where, spite of his presentiments, he still reigns with as much honour as glory.

I shall now pass rapidly over the rest of the events of this year, and hasten to the period in which we now are.

About the middle and close of the year 1784, cardinal de Rohan appeared quite an altered man; his manners were improved and more cheerful, he seeme delighted with his present situation, and, at length, unable longer to conceal the secret which consumed him, he came to me one day, and said,

"All has succeeded, and I am now perfectly reconciled to the queen."

"And is this reconciliation still to be a matter of concealment?"

"For a period of nearly a year from this time, but next year, on the day of Assumption, her majesty will publicly bestow on me such a decided mark of honour as shall incontestably prove that her favour is restored to me; imagine how happy I feel!"

"I can easily suppose that, but does the queen write to you?"

"I am consulted nearly every day by her majesty upon various affairs relative to public prosperity, and, in fact, she honours me with an almost boundless confidence."

"Upon my word, prince, I congratulate you, and that with so much the more sincerity, as what you tell me seems almost impossible."

"Oh, I have many ways of quieting the angry passions of your sex," said the cardinal, with an air of the most inconceivable conceit; "my influence over this *woman* is built upon a secure foundation. Do you know she has borrowed 100,000 crowns of me?"

"Of you!"

"That is to say, she has employed me to negotiate such a loan for her with certain wealthy bankers of my acquaintance."

"The more I hear the greater my surprise becomes——"

"I promise you it shall be redoubled before long,

but you must preserve the strictest silence as to all I may communicate to you."

"Believe me," returned I, "I know too well the danger of breaking it."

"Comte de Cagliastro did not wish me to breathe a syllable to you; but old friends you know, madame la comtesse—;"

And here our conversation ended, leaving me perfectly stupified at the inexplicable conduct of the queen; her reconciliation with one so shallow and presuming as the cardinal was at least a useless, if not a dangerous step; but the loan of 100,000 crowns baffled all my attempts to reconcile it with the high idea I had always entertained of the lofty and exalted principles of the queen, and again was I compelled to wait till time brought its own solution to this enigma.

The prince, as I before said, had strictly enjoined me to secrecy; this struck me as somewhat strange, and at last I decided on the supposition of the whole being intended by her majesty as a pretext for punishing the cardinal, by enjoining him to a silence she knew his vain and unstable nature too well to believe he would keep, that she might then find a reason in his disobedience for taking her full revenge upon him.

About the month of March I heard much talk of a magnificent necklace, valued at 2,000,000 of francs, which was now about to be sent by Bohemer, the jeweller, to Constantinople, he having vainly endeavoured to sell it to the king as a present for the queen, who refused to accept of it. The cardinal de Rohan was present when the affair was mentioned, and I perceived him look towards me and smile with a peculiar meaning, of which, as I did not comprehend it, I took not the least notice, nor did I recollect the next minute either what I had heard respecting the necklace, or the pantomimic gestures of the cardinal; but the very next time we were alone together, (a thing which frequently happened, from his knowledge of the hours

when I was generally to be found disengaged,) he said,

"Bohemer's necklace is not destined to adorn the favourite sultana; it will not go out of France, for I have purchased it."

"You, prince! and what, in heaven's name, do you mean to do with it? present it to your mistress, or the Holy Virgin, who patronizes your cathedral at Strasbourg?"

"I bought it not for myself, but the queen," answered the cardinal, with a look of the most perfect complacency and self-satisfaction.

"This is too much," cried I, "to believe that her majesty would refuse it from the king and yet accept it at your hands; indeed, my credulity cannot go so far as to believe it possible; besides, its enormous price!"

"Nay, I have but been her majesty's agent in the business, she purchases and pays for it from her own purse, and I have only assisted her in the gratification of her wishes; now do you doubt my being reinstated in her royal favour?"

"It would be impossible to do so," answered I, "without offending your reason or honour; I do, indeed, believe that the queen has bestowed her confidence upon you; but have a care, it will be a serious and a heavy charge; think of all the vexations and persecutions the jealousy of the Polignacs, the duc de Coigny, and the comte de Fersen will heap upon you."

"Oh, never mind; I have good shoulders and shall easily bear the burthen."

"Well," replied I, "I would not be in your place, nor in that of madame Campan."

"Why not of madame Campan?" inquired the cardinal, with a look of surprise.

"Because I imagine her to be the mediator between yourself and Marie Antoinette."

"Then undeceive yourself, for that lady knows not

one word of the matter; no, no, Marie Antoinette chooses her confidantes better than that."

"Can it be, then, the princesse de Henin? but, no, she is somewhat out of favour just now. The comtesse de Polastron? she is too much in the Polignac interest," said I, laughing; "well, then, madame de Dillon?"

"You will never guess; so, my dear countess, to put an end to your conjectures, my influential friend is a lady of high birth, allied to the royal family, and favoured with the queen's closest friendship; in a word, 'tis the comtesse de la Motte Valois."

The name sounded strange to my ear, for I had entirely forgotten the person who, ten or twelve years previous, had, under the signature of *France*, written to solicit the post of *femme de chambre* in my family; I therefore very naturally inquired who this comtesse de la Motte Valois might be?

"Do you not know her?"

"Not at all," replied I. "Has she been presented at court?"

"No, but she shortly will be."

"And you say the queen admits her to her presence?"

"With the utmost freedom, I assure you; 'tis true their meetings are concealed from the prying eyes of those about the queen, but that says nothing, for 'tis not by the most direct path the greatest share of court favour is frequently obtained."

"I could have easily comprehended your reasoning in the time of his late majesty, but how it applies to the present case I can scarcely conceive."

"The queen," pursued the cardinal, "is anxious to restore to madame de la Motte Valois the rank she has lost, and is now endeavouring to procure her a handsome and settled income; meanwhile, she supplies her from her own royal purse, and employs her as an agent with me; it is through the intervention of this madame de la Motte that I receive her majesty's commands."

"And you have purchased this celebrated necklace for the queen's own use?"

"At the price of 1,600,000 francs, to be paid for by instalments, guaranteed by the hand of her majesty herself."

After particulars so minutely detailed, how could I (who, indeed, seldom troubled myself with much reflection) have for a moment supposed that the cardinal was the dupe of the greatest villainy you can conceive. I replied, however,

"What surprises me, prince, is, that you have not pressed for an interview with her majesty; it would be so much more agreeable for you personally to vindicate your character from the many charges laid to it."

The prince admitted the propriety of this observation, and a few days afterwards he showed me a note in the queen's own handwriting appointing a meeting with him in the gardens at Versailles after midnight had struck. The cardinal was in ecstacies; this very night would decide his fate; he quitted me, therefore, almost beside himself with joy, promising to see me again early the following day.

I awaited his coming with extreme impatience, and he soon arrived, even more joyful than he had been the preceding morning. "No more doubts, no more mistrust," exclaimed he; "my happiness is secure, I have both seen and spoken to the queen; she met me in the shrubbery which leads direct from the colonnade; but she had barely time to utter a few words, for madame and her sister approached us; I hid myself behind the bushes; no person either saw or heard me, and I am confident of being prime minister ere long; these Polignacs cannot hold out another month against the blows I am preparing for them; oh, my dear countess, one of the first uses I shall make of my power will be to restore to you what you have lost."

The poor prince believed himself at least a second cardinal Richelieu, and his brain must have been quite turned ere he could have devised such absurd and

extravagant schemes as those he unfolded to me, calculated to impress me with but a poor idea of the manner in which he would employ his expected power. The cardinal then proceeded to give me every particular of his midnight audience at Versailles. The queen, he said, was dressed in white, and held a rose in her hand. As she approached, the happy prince bent his knee before her; but prohibiting this act of humility by a wave of her hand, she uttered a few words, but of such deep import, as to fill the heart of the cardinal with joy and content. He might now, he said, justly consider himself as being in the fullest possession of her majesty's confidence, and proceeded to dilate upon all the brilliancy of his present prospects with a loquacity I did not care to interrupt, for my thoughts were busy with the facts he had just laid before me.

Still, spite of my reserve upon this subject, for which I had afterwards ample reason for self-congratulation, I made every inquiry as to who this madame de la Motte Valois could be; and the result of my research was, that she was generally looked upon as a species of female fortune-hunter, supposed to engross a large share of the affections of the cardinal de Rohan, and further, that she was an illegitimate branch of the house of Valois. When the story of her misfortunes was made known to me, I at once recognised the petitioner who signed herself *France*, and, very unthinkingly, I reported the circumstance, which did not fall to the ground, as you will hear in the sequel.

I could glean no information relative to her connection with the queen; no person had ever seen her in any other part of the château than that appropriated for such as had petitions to present; and the only sensation she appeared to have excited, was a feeling of surprise why the king did not bestow on her the same pension he had granted to her brother and sister. After having exhausted this subject, my informant went on to relate one of far greater interest. The queen, who had now reached her thirtieth year, had signified

to her milliner, that, considering the approach to that age as a period at which all youthful finery should be laid aside, it was her wish in future to have all head-dresses made for her perfectly devoid of either feathers or flowers.

These scruples on the part of her majesty were generally disapproved of by those of her own age and beyond it, who thought it very ill-judged and unnecessary to proclaim the arrival of old age, or to fix any particular period for a female's ceasing to be young; that a lady might, with good management, continue thirty for the next ten years, and a thousand other remarks equally savouring of female vanity; they forgot there was such a thing at court as a *Royal Almanac*, in which her majesty's age was yearly inscribed. I learned also that the queen had given up all fancy dresses, such as Polonaises, Turkish and Circassian robes, &c., &c., and meant for the future to confine herself to loose and flowing vestments, and we were even threatened with seeing the stiff, formal style of our grandmothers' days brought again into fashion. These caprices on the part of her majesty were generally attributed to her advanced state of pregnancy; her mind seemed uncommonly saddened as the period of her delivery approached, and she seemed anxious to calm her many griefs in the bosom of religion. She confessed twice, and gave so much of her time up to her ghostly adviser, that the court looked on in dismal apprehension of seeing a second reign *à la Maintenon.*

The clergy profited by these dispositions to irritate the queen against Beaumarchais; and the comte d'Artois, who had never liked him, preferred a violent complaint against this celebrated man, who, in a stinging reply to a direct attack upon him, had given way to all his natural causticity, and indulged in remarks bearing, as his royal highness was pleased to consider it, upon the king, queen, and family. His majesty had never liked Beaumarchais, and all these causes were considered sufficient to authorize his confinement

in St. Lazare, while the Parisians, indignant at an act for which they could see no reason or provocation, rose with violence to demand his release; and such was the popular clamour, that they finally attained their object, and Beaumarchais was set at liberty. The poet, once again free, determined to avenge himself, and not being able by open violence to accomplish his purpose, commenced a series of indirect attacks upon his persecutors, which did them infinite mischief.

My thoughts were now thrown into a fresh channel by the alarming illness of M. de Choiseul, who was afflicted with a sort of apoplexy, from which there seemed but slender hopes of his ever recovering; his last moments were attended by a numerous train of friends, the duchesse de Grammont, the comtesse de Brienne, the prince de Beauvau, the duc de Châtelet, and his deserving and ill-treated wife, were also among the number of mourners. Four secretaries were scarcely sufficient to write the numerous bulletins issued, and his bed was surrounded by eleven physicians, just ten more than were requisite to dispatch him into the other world according to the most approved rules of their profession.

At the commencement of his illness the queen sent a page regularly to inquire how he was going on, but as the disease increased, four were employed for that purpose; the king alone exhibited no share of interest in the fate of the ex-minister.

The disease rapidly gained ground, and the duc de Choiseul expired on the 9th of May, 1787, and very possibly, from the attention bestowed upon him during his illness, he might have died in the hope of a restoration to favour, had health been granted him. His remains were carried to his parish church of St. Eustache, escorted by all the nobility of France; he left behind him upwards of 12,000,000 of debts, and his fortune being insufficient to discharge them, his widow appropriated hers to the purpose. Shall I confess that, for my own part, I sincerely regretted a man

who had once been my most bitter enemy? I always did justice to his many shining qualities, and, at his death, all he had ever done to injure me completely faded from my recollection.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Birth of the duc de Normandy—Arrest of the cardinal de Rohan—That prelate is accused of having stolen the necklace—Truth breaks out—The close of this affair—The prince de Soubise—The abbé Georgel—An interview—The sentence—Inoculation of the dauphin.

In the month of March, 1785, the queen gave birth to the duc de Normandy, now dauphin by the death of his august brother, and this fresh assurance of leaving direct heirs to the throne, was received by the people with the utmost joy; but upon the queen's visit to Notre Dame (where, according to custom, she went to return thanks for her safe delivery) she was received either with a mournful silence, or by cries of disapprobation.

I was sitting alone on the 15th of August, about five o'clock in the evening, when a person entered, so pale, so trembling, and agitated, that I could scarcely recognise the baron de Sugère, to whom I had given permission at all times to call on me, that he might serve as a kind of court gazette; for latterly he had procured sufficient interest to be presented at Versailles, and I, knowing how useful one of his prying disposition might be, aided him with all my power. The 15th of August was the feast of the Assumption, the very day on which prince Louis expected to receive such striking proofs of the queen's favour; the unfortunate cardinal, since the first interview he had related to me between himself and Marie Antoinette, had spoken of several

others that had succeeded it, and in which her majesty had confirmed all the gracious promises made in her letters. Curious to know in what manner she would fulfil her royal pledge to the cardinal on this important day, (for that she would keep an assurance once given I did not in the least doubt,) I had requested the baron de Sugère to pay his respects at court, and to return to me and acquaint me with all that was passing. Alas! I was far from suspecting the real state of things.

"Mercy upon me, baron," cried I, as he entered, "what can have befallen you; has your carriage broken down on the road? or have you been attacked by thieves?"

"The cardinal de Rohan, madam, is a ruined man! he has just been arrested by the king's command, dressed in his pontifical robes, and at the very foot of the altar," exclaimed the baron, almost bursting with the importance of his communication.

A sudden cry escaped me.

"Prince Louis arrested!" said I; "who! the cardinal?"

"Even he, madam," replied the baron; "and that, too, with a most cruel publicity, in the great gallery of Versailles, in the presence of an immense crowd of persons."

"Prince Louis arrested!" repeated I, as if my mind could not receive the idea, "why? wherefore? what has he done?"

"He is suspected of having betrayed certain state secrets which had come under his knowledge, of having engaged in a conspiracy against the royal family, and for forming designs contrary to the peace and security of his majesty or his dominions."

"Is that all, baron?" said I, with a bitter smile; for I could not help thinking that my informer was indulging his malicious propensities with a little exaggeration. "I remember that the cardinal was not among the number of your friends."

"His present situation, madam, gives him such a claim upon my notice and attention that he can scarcely be deemed indifferent to me; I shall not leave him till I have penetrated into this mysterious intrigue, learnt the exact nature of his offence, and followed him in all its consequences."

"A truce with commentaries, baron," cried I, "and let me hear facts, if you please."

"Then, so it was," replied the baron; "the cardinal was waiting in the king's chamber the moment for attending mass, at which, I believe, he was to officiate, when he received a message from his majesty, requesting his immediate attendance in his private cabinet; the cardinal obeyed, and after a stay of about twenty minutes, came out with a flushed and angry countenance, and began to pace the gallery with an unsteady step. All at once the baron de Breteuil quitted his majesty's chamber, accompanied by the duc de Villeroy, captain of the guards, who, addressing an inferior officer near him, said, 'Follow his eminence by the king's commands;' upon which the officer in question, M. de Jouffray, approaching the cardinal, told him he was his prisoner. Prince Louis, pale as death, uttered not a syllable, but led the way to his apartment, merely stopping as he went to adjust his shoe; for this purpose he stooped down, and, as *I* think, contrived to scrawl a few lines with a pencil on a slip of paper, then resumed his stately demeanour, and walked on, followed by the duc de Villeroy, M. de Jouffray, and M. d'Aguesseau, major in the guards, after which two sentinels were placed at his door. Judge of our astonishment and curiosity; but as yet nothing can be learned of the motives of this extraordinary arrest. At three o'clock, the comte d'Agoult, chief of the brigade, informed the cardinal that he must go to Paris immediately. I waited until I saw him safely off, and then hurried off to share with you all the various emotions produced by so unaccountable an event; who could

ever have thought that prince Louis could be at once a traitor, a conspirator, and a regicide?"

"Why, my dear baron, you told me but this moment, that no one knew as yet the cause of prince Louis's arrest."

"True, but we must conjecture something; it is impossible to remain silent upon such occasions."

"Perhaps so; then why not let the cardinal have the benefit of your conjectures, by supposing him the victim of some false conspiracy?"

"Exactly, then, to declare the queen guilty by proclaiming the innocence of the cardinal."

"Heaven forbid I should recommend such an alternative."

"What then would you do?"

"Simply confine myself to the fact of the prince's being arrested, and trust that he may be enabled to justify himself."

"You are but a cold calculator, madam."

"Sir, I would fain respect my sovereign and the unfortunate at the same time."

"But this impartiality is not what a sovereign likes, and to pity an accused person overmuch is to incur the risk of passing for his accomplice; and I should, as your friend, advise you, madame la comtesse, if you have any papers which may at all compromise you, to destroy them; I should recommend all known as the associates of the cardinal to take every precaution in time."

"My lord," said I, angrily, "you carry your rage for *conjectures* so far as to lead me to believe you out of your senses, when I have hitherto only found you dangerous and malicious." So saying, and deaf to all the excuses of the baron, I quitted the apartment, and retired to my chamber, where, throwing myself into a chair, and almost ready to weep, I began to reflect upon what I had just heard. Spite of my knowledge of the many faults of prince Louis, I could but feel grateful to him for the friendship he had ever shown

me, and the confidence he had reposed in me. Ignorant of the precise causes of his arrest, I saw in it but the natural consequences of the king's displeasure, excited, no doubt, by some hidden conspiracy of the Polignacs; and while I regretted to see his eminence in so distressing a situation, I shuddered at the idea of the queen's being in any way implicated in his disgrace. Most anxiously did I await the arrival of the duc de Cossé, who was to call in the evening with the latest intelligence he could collect.

When I returned to my salon I found many persons assembled there, all in possession of the important news, and each anxious to repeat them after their own fashion, although no one seemed as yet certain of the rights of the tale; even the duc de Cossé could give me no satisfactory information, although he promised to make every possible inquiry, and communicate to me the result. About ten o'clock madame de Cerneuil was announced; this lady was usually considered as very good authority in any case relative to the conduct of ministers, with most of whom, particularly the baron de Breteuil, she was upon the most intimate terms. She allowed us to tell the all-engrossing story after our own version, and patiently waited till we had exhausted our comments upon it; at length, when all seemed weary with the discussion, she said, "Pray be under no fears for the cardinal de Rohan's losing his head on the scaffold, I assure you he has a much greater chance of passing the rest of his life in the galleys."

Every one exclaimed against so improbable a conjecture, and the partisans of the prince, with myself at their head, loudly resented so injurious an idea; but without being in the least disconcerted, madame de Cerneuil coolly replied, "Still, ladies and gentlemen, I have one reason for supporting my assertion, and that is, the fact of prince Louis de Rohan, grand almoner of France, being now under arrest for stealing a diamond necklace."

These words, added to what I already knew, gave me at once an insight into the whole affair; meanwhile, madame de Cerneuil proceeded to acquaint her attentive audience that the cardinal de Rohan had been arrested at the suit of Messrs. Bosange and Bohemer, jewellers, for having, by means of a forged authority, obtained from them a necklace valued at 1,600,000 francs, which necklace had disappeared without their being enabled to trace its destination. Madame de Cerneuil went on to relate particular after particular with so much minuteness of detail, as to silence all inclination to rebut so formidable a charge against his eminence; the name of the comtesse de la Motte Valois was not even alluded to, although, for my own part, I began very seriously to suspect her of being at the bottom of the intrigue; yet, remembering all I had heard from prince Louis of his written and personal communication with the queen, I was lost in a labyrinth of perplexity which was not relieved on the following day, when the duc de Cossé (who had promised me to make every inquiry) called with the confirmation of all madame de Cerneuil had told us, merely adding thereto the information of the lost necklace having been purchased on credit expressly for the queen; that, at the moment of the cardinal's arrest, he had dispatched a few lines, hastily scrawled with pencil, to the abbé Georgel, desiring of him to burn all his papers, and that the prince had just been conveyed to the Bastille, there to await his trial.

The next facts learned were the arrests of the principal instigators of the plot, the comte and comtesse de Cagliastro, M. de Villette, and baron de Planta, one of the cardinal's most intimate friends, a man of the strictest honour, descended from one of the most ancient and honourable families in Switzerland. At length, however, truth pierced through the many attempts to conceal it, and the innocence of the queen was fully established, whilst that of the cardinal became much more equivocal, and all agreed that he must either

have played the part of a rogue or a simpleton; to me it was evident enough that the agent in whom he had so much confided, madame de la Motte Valois, had been making him her tool in obtaining possession of the necklace, which she had now confiscated to her own use. The only difficulty consisted in accounting for the various interviews which, according to prince Louis's account, had taken place between him and the queen, but this mystery was also cleared up, when a female named Oliva came forward and confessed that she had received a large sum from madame de la Motte Valois for personating Marie Antoinette during several short meetings given to the cardinal de Rohan in the gardens of Versailles. This last explanation cleared up everything, for as to the conversation reported by prince Louis to have passed between himself and her majesty, I could easily imagine they had their origin in his own imagination alone, with a view to obtain my more ready belief of his wondrous tale.

My first care in this state of affairs was to call on the prince de Soubise, whom I found perfectly overwhelmed by this last stroke of ill-fortune. In the course of the next day I received a note from him, telling me that about eleven o'clock on the following evening a person from the country would call and bring me tidings of my friends; I was further recommended to place entire confidence in my visitor.

I easily guessed that this country messenger was, in fact, an emissary from the cardinal, and my first care was to burn the paper conveying the intelligence of his coming, that it might by no means involve my own safety. I said nothing of the circumstance until about ten o'clock at night, when I sent a message to the porter, desiring him to admit a countryman who would inquire for me; I set Henriette to watch lest any should overhear our discourse, and bade Zamor wait at the lodge to conduct him to me the instant he arrived; the time passed heavily on, and I began to imagine my visitor would not come, when Henriette

ushered into my apartment an individual so cleverly disguised, that I had much difficulty in recognising the abbé Georgel, prince Louis's *grand vicaire* and factotum, a regular jesuit, and worthy son of old Ignatius, possessing a perfect knowledge of every species of business and intrigue; by turns dissimulating, bold, and even daring, yet crafty and revengeful. This skilful agent was of the utmost importance to his patron; deep and designing, the abbé Georgel seemed less to direct than comprehend, and almost anticipate advice given him, one glance sufficed to show him all he was expected to do, and no scruples or punctilios were permitted to interfere with the discharge of his commission; in the present emergency he was the very life and soul of the defence for prince Louis, collecting proofs of his innocence, furnishing the means of diverting or attracting public opinion, and even conceiving the project, afterwards carried into effect with such fatal daring, of casting all blame and suspicion upon the queen. But all this zeal and devotion was but ill repaid, for after the termination of the affair, some intriguing persons, taking advantage of the exile of the abbé, contrived to involve him in a quarrel with his friend and protector, and finally deprived him, if not of the esteem of prince Louis, at least of that unlimited confidence he had hitherto enjoyed. M. Georgel was but little in the habit of visiting me, nor had we met before since the nomination of prince Louis as ambassador to Vienna.

"You see, madam," said he to me, when I had a little recovered my surprise at the singularity of his costume, "you see, madam, to what the malice of our enemies may reduce us; but however his highness may for the present suffer from the acts of the baron de Breteuil, fear not but we shall soon set all to rights; justice will speedily end the present impotent attempt to injure my noble patron, whose regard for, and confidence in you, is abundantly proved by the unreserved communications he has made you."

"And be assured," replied I, "I am wholly incapable of betraying the confidence reposed in me."

"We doubt it not, madam; but with your leave I will just recapitulate what I have heard from his eminence, in order that I may understand whether his memory has failed him in any particular, or if my own may be treacherous."

The abbé then proceeded to repeat succinctly the various conversations held between prince Louis and myself relative to his reinstatement into the queen's favour; the loan of the 100,000 crowns, and the purchase of the necklace, omitting nothing but the multiplied interviews stated by him to have taken place with Marie Antoinette; I noticed this circumstance to the surprise of the abbé, who exclaimed,

"How, madam, could his highness ever have affirmed that he had been admitted to the honour of speech with her majesty?"

"Most certainly," replied I.

"What extravagant folly!" returned the abbé; "no, madam, rest assured he never spoke to the queen, unless, indeed, the necklace really *did* reach its destination."

"Unless his eminence can fully establish that fact," said I, "silence will be his best course;" and these words I endeavoured to pronounce with a firmness which I deemed necessary under present circumstances, adding, "and I totally disbelieve that cardinal de Rohan was ever once admitted to a conference with her majesty."

"And would you continue to assert this opinion in a court of justice, even though my master should affirm that he had met the queen?"

"I would proclaim him a false and untrue witness," answered I, boldly, and strain every nerve to prove him so. Listen, M. l'abbé, the conduct of the cardinal has been blamable enough, let him not be induced to aggravate his faults by an attack as hateful as it must be futile."

"That is precisely my opinion," cried the old jesuit, changing colour in spite of himself; "for, in that case the opposing party would be too much for him, and must crush him; whilst, on the other hand, he would be throwing away that time in recrimination, which might be usefully employed in proving his innocence, and, I venture to promise that by following the latter path, he may with safety reckon upon your silence touching all matters confided to you."

"I pledge myself," answered I, "to conceal every thing that may involve prince Louis, myself, or others."

"Then my commission is ended, madam," replied the abbé, bowing; "but one thing more I recollect my master charged me to say, his eminence is desirous of having your testimony relative to a point of little consequence to you, whilst it is one of vital importance to himself; he wishes to prove that the female who has thus fatally made him her dupe has been long engaged in working on the credulity of others, and that she even so far presumed as to sign herself *de France*, in a letter which she wrote ten or twelve years since."

"I should be greatly obliged to the prince to dispense with my appearing as a witness."

"Nay, madam, that is hardly possible; besides, you are aware the little fact I allude to has been told by yourself to various persons, and is generally and publicly known, so that it is altogether unlikely that you should escape a summons from one party or the other to attend the trial; be therefore kind enough to afford my master this last proof of your condescending interest in his welfare.

Although this part of the business seemed to me something like a breach of good faith on the part of the abbé, yet I yielded with the best grace I could, and the abbé, repeating his injunctions for my prudence and silence as to all intrusted to me, took his leave, hating me as much for my plain dealing as I did him for his crafty cunning. Nor was it long before I felt the force of his malice, for he continued so com-

pletely to injure me in the opinion of prince Louis, that nothing I could say or do was able to undeceive him; in a word, the cardinal and myself never met again, neither did he ever reply during his exile to the many friendly letters I wrote him.

True to his word, prince Louis sent me a summons to attend his trial, which took place the 12th of December, 1785, and equally faithful to the sentiments I had expressed, I strove to render my deposition as vague as possible by throwing a degree of doubt and uncertainty into the circumstance of the signature; and this was the principal means employed by the abbé Georgel to injure me in the estimation of his patron.

The cause took the usual course, and the cardinal was declared innocent of all offence, except that of presumption in believing himself reinstated in the queen's favour, while the comtesse de la Motte Valois was sentenced to be flogged, branded, and confined for life in some strong prison. The former part of the sentence was duly executed, but the latter was evaded by the lady's making her escape to England, where, if I mistake not, she still resides.

I heard from various channels of the deep regret with which the queen learned the termination of the affair, as regarded the cardinal, whose audacity in coupling her name with his, she would fain have seen severely punished. Her tears and entreaties, however, determined Louis XVI. to visit the conduct of prince Louis with his severest displeasure, and he accordingly deprived him at once of the office of grand almoner of France, and his order of the Holy Ghost, banishing him to his *Abbaye de la Chaise Dieu* in Auvergne, but afterwards permitting him to retire to his bishopric of Strasbourg.

No one lamented his exile, nor was his defence undertaken by any person, except with the view of annoying the queen, whose enemies, as well as those of her favourite minister, M. de Calonne, were each day becoming more numerous and daring in their

attempts. Still, there were some faithful hearts left to rally round their sovereign, and none beat with a purer loyalty than my own.

It was about this period that the purchase made by the queen of St. Cloud as a residence when not at Versailles, made me her neighbour. The 1,400,000 paid to the duc d'Orleans for this estate produced fresh murmurs and discontents among the people, who would willingly have seen their queen housed in some back street of Paris during the finest months of the year, at an expense of twenty francs per month, so little did her health or comfort concern any person; everything conspired to announce a coming storm.

It was at St. Cloud that the dauphin was inoculated by Jean Berthon, physician to the comte d'Artois, who had previously performed the same ceremony upon the king, queen, and royal family, and this event was one of no slight interest to those who remembered the decree of the former parliament prohibiting inoculation. The health of the child who furnished the virus was carefully scrutinized by all the medical attendants of the children of France; the dauphin bore the operation most successfully, and inoculation triumphed throughout the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Death of the duc d'Orleans—Madame de Montesson—Death of Frederic the Great and the duc de Praslin—Death of the prince de Soubise—Céline—The ambassadors of Tippoo Saib—Chon at Paris.

THIS letter, my dear friend, will cost me many painful recollections, from its reference to the loss of many of my old friends and contemporaries, who dropped off one after another, leaving me to almost envy their exit from so troublesome and agitated a period as the present; and first, I will begin with the duc d'Orleans, who died just a month after the trial of prince Louis, much regretted, and was succeeded by his son, the duc de Chartres.

Madame de Montesson, unable to claim the privileges of a lawful widowhood, retired into a convent, there to pass the period of her mourning. She would fain have assumed all the greatness of a duchess dowager of Orleans, but this the king would by no means allow, and I must confess I was ill-natured enough to feel pleased with him for his resolution, for madame de Montesson was one of the many persons I had frequently obliged during my prosperity, who chose to stand aloof when a reverse of fortune befell me; since my abode at Luciennes I had never seen her, a few unmeaning messages being all that passed between us.

The death of the duc de Praslin, which followed closely upon that of his cousin, de Choiseul, terminated one of those ignoble and useless careers, which leaves nothing but a place in the genealogical tree, and is only remembered in the court guide.

Another person of very different pretensions also descended to the tomb this year; I allude to the great Frederic of Prussia, the first in renown among modern

princes, and one of whose noble qualities the page of history will tell many a glorious tale; I must do him more justice than he was ever disposed to show our sex, who were by no means high in his estimation.

One of my friends repeated to me an expression made use of in a large party when information of the death of Frederic was first announced, "Then with him has expired the last spark of royalty throughout Europe."

The poor prince de Soubise, since the affair of the necklace, had fallen into a state of the most cruel dejection; at length, however, the sympathizing kindness of his friends roused him once more so far as to mingle in the gay world, and he even resumed his place at court as one of the privy council; but the queen, who could never pardon his relationship to prince Louis, treated him with the greatest rigour, and would scarcely admit him to her presence; nor was her prejudice unfounded, she had received but too much provocation from the prince and his family, (who all combined to sink and degrade her in the eyes of the world,) to be able to forgive it either as a woman or a queen.

This old nobleman dragged on his existence till the year 1787, when he expired at an advanced age, as much beloved in his own family as he was disliked by the world in general, which, indeed, is only enabled to judge by outward show of a man's real character. I believe I was the only person by whom he was sincerely regretted, for, spite of our frequent misunderstandings, he had always been a steady partisan in my cause, and his advice had frequently been of material consequence and assistance to me. The maréchale de Mirepoix chancing to call in while I was sitting in deep reflection upon the death of my old friend, exclaimed,

"Why, my dear countess, you seem to have a tear to shed to the memory of all your acquaintances; I am afraid you will hardly reserve one for me."

"Fear not," replied I; "but I trust you at least will

outlive me; surely I am not fated to stand quite alone in the world."

"Oh, my dear, you forget I am now old, very old; but you will bestow a few tears upon me? that will be something more than *I* am entitled to, who never yet wept for any one."

"Can that be possible?"

"True, I assure you; from my earliest youth I perceived the folly of grieving for those who were for ever lost to us, so I determined to make myself contented by the belief of their being far better off than I was; this idea served to reconcile me to the most severe loss; and, besides, I have experienced so many, that had I wept for each my eyes would have been perpetual fountains, and I should have been completely dissolved in tears. I therefore made a rule never to disturb my head or make my eyes red by giving way to useless regrets; by this means I have avoided head-aches, heart-aches, and every tendency to indigestion."

The poor maréchale! she spoke as she acted, and, heaven knows, I have had ample time and cause for almost wishing I had adopted the same line of conduct.

Scarcely had madame de Mirepoix quitted me than Céline arrived, attired in the most whimsical manner; the grotesque robe she wore, and the formal style of her head-dress, so completely disguised her, that I could with difficulty recognise the gay and animated Céline.

"For mercy's sake, what is the reason of this singular costume?" inquired I; "are you going to a masquerade, or what has befallen your senses?"

"You do not then admire me," said Céline, smiling. "I am sorry for that, for I flattered myself I was perfect in my attire as well as part."

"Oh, you are going to perform in some play, are you?" said I, a fresh light breaking in upon me.

"I am, indeed, in a comedy which will last for life."

"Indeed, what, a country engagement?"

"No less than to represent the lady bountiful of the village, and that too, through the medium of a good husband; but listen, and judge how far I have acted wisely. The truth is, my dear friend, I am weary of the unsettled and irregular life I have for some time led, and now that my thirtieth birthday has passed, I begin to look for something better than the mere pursuit of pleasure. My fortune is considerable, amounting to no less than 500,000 livres in funded property, besides jewels worth 50,000 crowns, and plate valued at 60,000 livres more; this dowry has been sufficiently tempting to bring me many offers of marriage, and, among others, one from a count V., who, besides holding the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the army, possesses a fine estate in the South of France, somewhat encumbered with debts, it is true, but that my louis will soon clear off; he knows every particular of my past life, although, of course, none of his family will ever be enlightened on the subject. I shall be introduced to them as the widow of a banker; in short, my marriage will take place in a few days, and I shall depart for a place where I may confidently reckon upon living in credit and respect. The count tells me that our joint income will be 60,000 crowns per annum, a sum sufficient for every comfort and enjoyment. With a view of conciliating the females with whom I shall shortly associate, I have at once adopted their costume, and you see me now attired in all the taste and elegance of a fashionable in the South of France. Now what think you of my scheme? is it not better and wiser than dragging on a dull and disgraced existence in Paris, perhaps to fall into the hands of some designing spendthrift or unprincipled fortune-hunter?"

"You have, indeed, chosen wisely," replied I, embracing her, "and most sincerely do I congratulate you upon the turn affairs have taken."

"I am quite sure of obtaining all due consideration among my new neighbours, for I shall uphold my rank with all becoming dignity, follow the most received

opinions, and, if it be necessary, even become a devotee to gain their good opinion."

I smiled at the earnestness with which Céline expressed herself. She then proceeded more fully to explain the precautions she had taken, as well to conceal her past indiscretions as to secure her fortune from being squandered by her husband; and I could but admire the extreme prudence and foresight which seemed to influence every part of her conduct.

I heard from her only yesterday through the medium of her brother Jules, who, owing to the esteem in which Céline was held, had been raised to the command of a regiment in Champagne. Céline, now madame de V., was beloved and respected by the whole neighbourhood, and, upon one occasion, when some disturbances had broken out in the province, and her château was threatened with violence, the whole body of peasantry took up arms in defence of their beloved lady, declaring they would rather die than see the least injury offered her.

Before I enter upon the gloomy recital of my many troubles and chagrins, I will indulge in relating a circumstance not a little flattering to my self-love.

In 1788 the ambassadors of Tippoo Saib visited Paris, and I invited them to Luciennes to partake of a fête given in honour of their embassy. An immense number of visitors was assembled, consisting of nearly every person of rank or consequence in the kingdom; I was told, too, that the most august individual in the empire had deigned to avail himself of the ball being a masqued one, to honour it with his presence, although from the attempts made to envelope himself in a large domino and mantle, it was evident any demonstration of that loyal affection with which my heart was filled would have been presuming and highly displeasing. Still, this mark of goodness touched me to the heart, and I still live in the hopes of one day proving, if necessary, with my very life, the extent of my gratitude and devotion.

The ambassadors of the Indian prince were much delighted with the entertainment, and persisted in styling me *sultana;* no explanation could make them comprehend that I had not been married to the late king. One of them, a handsome looking personage of great consideration in his own country, inquired whether I felt any inclination a second time to enter the marriage state? I replied that I had already a husband.

"Does the sultan of France keep him in confinement?" said my interrogator.

"No," said I; "why do you ask me the question?"

"Because I cannot fancy if he were at liberty he could bear to quit you for one instant."

This Asiatic gallantry made me smile, while I recollected that the relation he alluded to was peaceably settled in the country, without bestowing more care or concern about me than I did for him. I saw, too, but very little of comte Jean, who was far from growing better as he grew older; he had married an extremely pretty woman, who all at once became the established friend and companion of the comptroller-general. I was mentioning to my brother-in-law the many discreditable reports I had heard upon the occasion, when he interrupted me by a hearty laugh.

"Bless you, my dear sister," cried he, "I was compelled to make my wife useful, since my own services could obtain no consideration, and, therefore, I established her as house-steward to the comptroller-general, and a very profitable post it is, I can assure you."

"But not particularly honourable," returned I.

"Why, *I* see no *dis*honour in it, wherefore should others do so? But then you know, sister-in-law, *I* am a philosopher, and my only regret is that I did not marry you; we should have made things answer so well together, we should have almost coined money."

"You might very possibly, but for my own part——"

"Well, never mind," cried he, "it would have been the same thing, husband and wife are but one after all."

"I am very grateful to you for never having tempted me with so dazzling an offer, for I can with truth declare I am much better satisfied with my present condition."

Chon was my next visitor; poor girl! she began to see the folly of having thrown away the good opportunities she once had of marrying well; then she was for ever flirting with our *cousin* de Maupeou, now she found a lack of admirers.

"Oh, my dear sister," said she, almost weeping, "what a base, deceitful world is this! *I*, who in your prosperous days possessed such a crowd of adoring lovers, lost them the very day after the death of your royal protector; no one now thinks me handsome, or tells me so at least."

"You are no worse off than myself," replied I, "for *I*, who was pronounced perfectly faultless while Louis XV. lived, have since his death heard of nothing but my imperfections."

I continued to lead my usual life, dividing my time between Paris and Luciennes, in the society of old friends, and in the cultivation of new acquaintances; but in the midst of the sympathizing kindness of many justly-beloved individuals, I experienced a severe blow from the unkind desertion of Henriette, she whom I had so long cherished as a sister, quitted me upon some slight pretext at scarcely a minute's warning. Zamor, too, now grown up to manhood; conducted himself so ill that I ought immediately to have dismissed him; this I was weak enough not to do, but overlooked his fault upon his promise of amendment.

I am told I shall have cause to repent of the lenity shown, but I am willing to hope such will not be the case. Meanwhile, my life is drawing on towards that termination which compels us, spite of ourselves, to look back upon all that has been said or done, and exclaim in the words of Holy Writ, "All is vanity."

CHAPTER XXV.

The Polignacs at Bath—Beaumarchais—Madame and the queen—Mirabeau—A secret—The duchesse de Grammont—Melancholy conversation—Insurrection in Paris.

LOUIS XV. was but too correct in his opinion of France, which he always compared to a child bound and confined in swaddling clothes, for, said he, "France is so tied down by old customs, manners, and prejudices, and so guided by etiquette, that it can only be likened to an infant, whose tottering and uncertain steps are confined to the length allowed by the leading strings in which it is held."

The Polignacs began to take both alarm and offence at the present state of things, and by way of escaping the persecuting fire of the daily journals, resolved upon a journey to Bath, ostensibly for the purpose of drinking the waters there, but, in reality, to try the effect of absence upon the queen.

Those who wished well to the royal family employed this period in pointing out how deeply injurious the habit of expense indulged in for her own sake and that of her friends must prove to the interests of the kingdom, that but for the Polignacs France would not be placed, as she now was, upon the very verge of bankruptcy, and that, without some decided step on the part of her majesty, inevitable ruin was at hand.

The heart of Marie Antoinette was too good to reject this advice; she loved France, and ardently desired its prosperity, and lent a willing ear to every scheme proposed for reforming the profuse expenditure of her household, for which purpose she wrote a long and confidential letter to the archbishop of Toulouse. But the travellers had not been so improvident as to depart without leaving trusty persons who should report to

them any change that might occur in the sentiments of the queen; they were, therefore, not long uninformed of the reformation going on, and starting upon receipt of the intelligence, reached Paris in time to stop the progress of the good work; for Marie Antoinette, in the joy of seeing her friend, abandoned every wise and prudent resolution, and gave herself up more than ever to an infatuating partiality it was hoped had been laid aside for ever.

M. de Vergennes departed this life at the period I am describing, and his office was bestowed upon the comte de Montmorency, who was as much praised and extolled at the commencement of his *début* as he was afterwards blamed and decried; the truth was M. de Montmorency deserved neither the extravagant praise nor blame bestowed upon him; he had many strikingly good qualities, but nature never intended him for a prime minister.

It was in the midst of all these distractions that Beaumarchais produced his opera of *Tarare*, the mischievous tendency of which was alone counteracted by its extravagance and folly. I own I felt some alarm at the lengths the author had gone, and said so to him; he replied,

"This is not all you will see, before long——"

"Do you then mean to effect a regular revolution?"

"Why, we must be doing something," replied he, "we cannot always keep our arms folded in inaction."

I believe many were of the same opinion; and this desire to be *doing something* had much influence in all that has since befallen us. In 1787 things were rapidly ripening for a revolution; Madame had become a regular parliamentarian, and held many animated arguments with the queen on the subject. This latter undertook the vindication of the acts of the archbishop of Toulouse, when her sister-in-law cut her short by replying, "If your majesty persists in thus following the route marked out for you by the Polignacs, you

may certainly continue queen of *France*, but not of the *French*."

This remark was deeply resented, and a decided coolness sprung up between these illustrious relations, while the king, whose natural temperament rendered him far more susceptible of mournful presentiments than energetic resolutions, was more than once surprised in tears. Alas! this excellent prince ought either to have been born in happier times, or never to have ascended the throne.

Already did a seditious spirit begin to pervade the populace of Paris, and even the avenues of the palace resounded with the murmur of discontent.

But this was only the prelude of a coming storm, far more terrible in its effects, and thus passed the year away: the following one brought with it no alleviation of grievances, and was principally remarkable for the dismissal of M. de Brienne, and the restoration of M. Necker, as minister of finance. Things must have gone strongly against the royal party, when they could be induced to consent to the return of a person so every way obnoxious to themselves, their favourites, the nobility, and clergy; but the tide of popular faction ran too strongly to be opposed. Things went on from bad to worse, and were I to relate the afflicting position of affairs at this time, it would far exceed the limits of these letters; suffice it, that the quarrel between the court party and the people was only decided by the taking of the Bastille, after which event a second prince of France quitted his native land, followed by the Polignacs; a most terrible blow, of which I would not speak, but that I may explain the important part I acted in the business.

These facts were related to me by the comte de Narbonne, who disliked M. Necker as much as he admired the baroness de Staël, his daughter. "The Polignacs are lost," said he to me; "the 23d of June has effectually set the seal on their disgrace; heaven

grant this necessary blow may not have fallen too late to save their protectress." This last expression made me shudder, and most earnestly did I pray that it might, indeed, be in time to preserve our gracious princess.

My next informant was the comte de Mirabeau, whom I again met in society.

"Madam," said he to me, "I beg to offer my compliments to you as your friend or lover, whichever is most agreeable to yourself."

"Hateful man!" exclaimed I, "leave me; you are an object of abhorrence to me."

"Nay, nay, madam," replied he, with the most phlegmatic coolness, "be more moderate, or I shall attribute this warmth on your part to a desire of concealing your affection for me."

"Oh, no," returned I, "I never quarrel with any one, especially those who are too indifferent to me to excite an angry feeling; but I have no wish to make an enemy of you, or to evince a hostile spirit myself; if, indeed, former affections were to undergo this kind of change, a pretty woman would, after the lapse of a few years, find herself surrounded only by persons to hate and detest."

After this speech M. de Mirabeau very humbly threw himself on my mercy for pardon for his late perfidy, and this I granted, on condition that he should spare me in his writings; this compact he readily entered into, and, after a few more interviews, we became as good friends as though we had never met before.

Mirabeau, believing me opposed to the queen, was at no trouble to conceal his intentions and sentiments, and from him I learned that a plot was in agitation, in the very bosom of the national assembly, to commence a regular attack upon her.

No sooner was I in possession of this important secret, than I determined to apprize her majesty of the timely discovery; and for that purpose I wrote a note to the duchesse de Grammont, who immediately re-

turned for answer that she would meet me at the house of an old servant of hers, who resided in the Rue Neuve St. Eustache, where we might confer together without fear of interruption; I was punctual to the appointed hour, but I found madame de Grammont there before me, and, after the first interchange of the usual civilities, I related to her all I had heard from Mirabeau of the purposed attack, and the manner in which it would be commenced.

"These are sad times," replied the duchess, sighing, "when rebellion walks openly throughout the kingdom, and royalty is compelled to hide itself for very safety; these things could never have come to pass had those at the head of affairs cherished, as he deserved, one whose penetrating and expansive mind would both have foreseen and provided for such emergencies, instead of driving their good genius away to die in exile of a broken heart. Surely you, madam, must now reproach yourself for the disgrace of my excellent brother."

"No, indeed!" replied I, "my conscience reproaches me with nothing on that score; my war was but a defensive one, and the duc de Choiseul had himself alone to blame for having been the first to commence hostilities."

Madame de Grammont was silent for a few minutes, then exclaimed,

"Alas! did you but know how we were hurried on by the instigation of our enemies—but let that pass, it is over now, and your triumph, like our fortunes, has reached its termination."

"Yes," said I, "we have each lost dear and powerful friends; whither will our adverse fate next lead us?"

"To the scaffold, if there be truth in the prophecy of Cazotte!"

"What do I hear?" exclaimed I, with horror; "has such a destiny been foretold to you also?"

"How! *also?* has it been revealed to you as well as myself?"

I recollected the mirror of Cagliastro, and shuddered.

"How wicked are those impostors who thus play upon our credulity!" said I.

"I must not have you class Cazotte among such mere pretenders to the art," returned the duchess, "he is a man of many estimable qualities, whose profound learning, and acquaintance with the hidden mysteries of nature, enables him to read the book of futurity."

"May I know what he told you, madam?"

The duchess then related to me, that one evening when M. de Cazotte was at a large party, of which she made one, he was requested to consult the planets, and make known what would be the destiny of the persons assembled there; this he evaded by every possible pretext, until, finding they would take no excuse, he declared that of the whole of the company then before him, not one would escape a violent and public death, from which not even the king and queen would be exempt.

A cry of terror escaped me as I listened to these fatal words; madame de Grammont, however, spoke in a calm and unmoved voice, adding, when she saw my agitation,

"Surely you would not object to mount the scaffold in such honourable society?"

"Make not so serious a subject a matter for jesting, I beseech you," said I, in a trembling tone, "it freezes my very blood. I confess myself too much of a coward to be equal to such a conversation."

"Well, if you really have no courage, I suppose I must not frighten you too much," said the duchess, smiling.

"I would fain employ what little I may possess in defence of her majesty, by turning away from her the malice of her enemies."

"That is, indeed, our first duty, and I venture to assure you that the zeal and devotion you have displayed will meet with their just reward from our honoured mistress, whose heart is not formed for

ingratitude towards one to whom she is so essentially indebted. Alas! I fear but too many others in your place would gladly have left her to all the dangers of her situation."

"I thank God," replied I, energetically, "that I am not one of those. No! never can I sufficiently repay the benefits I have received at the hands of both herself and family, and well may her majesty reckon upon finding in me one of her most faithful and devoted servants."

The duchess warmly commended my sentiments, and, after having agreed upon a signal which should bring us to the same place whenever circumstances should require it, we separated, and the duchess immediately proceeded to lay before the queen all she had heard. The affair had been too circumstantially related to admit of any doubt, and after her majesty's friends had duly weighed and considered the matter, they decided that the most effectual way to prevent Mirabeau from proceeding the lengths he intended, would be rather to conciliate than annoy him, when, by ambiguous and half-uttered sentiments, he sought to cast suspicions upon the queen; it was surmised that he would not venture, unless under some powerful irritation, upon a plan of action, the consequences of which might fall so heavily upon his own head.

In pursuance of this plan, all were careful not to offer the most trivial opposition, when Mirabeau presented himself before the assembly, to demand of the president a decree, by which the person of the king was alone to be considered sacred throughout the kingdom; and by this prudent forbearance they rendered the malicious count fearful of proceeding further. This success induced the royal party to determine upon gaining Mirabeau over to their side, and I was charged with the commission.

The preconcerted signal having been sent me, I repaired to the old place of rendezvous, where I found the duchesse de Grammont expecting me.

"Are you in the constant habit of meeting comte de Mirabeau?" said she, after the first preliminaries had been discussed.

"But seldom, and that always in private," replied I.

"Well, try and persuade him to join us, and offer him as an inducement the payment of his debts, and 100,000 crowns over and above, with the post of plenipotentiary at the court of the elector of Hesse Cassel; the comte de Grais, who occupies the situation at present, will be placed in one equivalent to it."

"I will answer for him at such a price as that," cried I, "the state of his affairs would render 10,000 louis a bait sufficient to buy him, body and soul. I need only mention the payment of his debts, and some trifle over, to secure him wholly yours."

"Well, do the best you can, and rest assured we shall not gainsay whatever you may promise him."

Furnished with this *carte-blanche*, I wrote a note directly I returned home, begging of the count to come to me immediately, as I had a favour of much importance to ask of him. The ill-natured old man, determined upon making his visit as disagreeable as he could, presented himself at so early an hour on the following morning that scarcely a servant in the house was stirring to receive him. I was awakened, and hastily throwing on a wrapping-dress, I hurried to my visitor, who seemed more coolly malicious and spitefully facetious than I had yet seen him; without waste of time, I at once entered upon the subject for which I had sent for him, and proceeded to unfold my propositions, which I fully expected to see him receive with the most enthusiastic delight; the coldness and indifference with which he listened to me, however, somewhat staggered my hopes, and, by way of striking a decided blow, I spoke of the 100,000 crowns.

"A very pretty sum," replied Mirabeau, sarcastically, "to supply the card-purse of one's mistress; but, my very pretty ambassadress, I do not care for money, I have quite reformed, quite changed my ideas

on such subjects, and all I now feel any inclination for is, to render my poor talents conducive to the interests of France."

"But you have not yet heard the whole of the liberal offer with which I am charged," interrupted I; "you are further promised the office of plenipotentiary to the court of the elector of Hesse Cassel." I was proceeding, fully persuaded that now, indeed, I should see him all joyful acquiescence, when a loud laugh of derision rung in my ears. I looked with surprise, mingled with alarm. "You are surely mad!" exclaimed I.

"You may take me for a madman if you please," returned Mirabeau, calmly, "but have the goodness not to set me down as a fool. No, no! I may aspire to something more than burying myself in the wilds of Germany, to represent my sovereign at the court of a little petty prince, hardly better than myself."

"Then what would you have?"

"The post formerly occupied by M. de Maurepas."

I really believed the man was utterly deranged.

"Why," said I, "the first noblemen of the land could not ask more."

"For the simple reason," replied he, "that *they* are *but* noblemen, while *I* am *Mirabeau.* Hark ye, countess, the good people who have employed you do not understand me yet, but so much the worse for them; they would fain buy cheaply those services which I am perfectly certain, ere long, they will thankfully obtain at any price; yes, the time will come when *I* shall dictate conditions, not receive them, and when, too, my most exorbitant demands will be thankfully acceded to."

As Mirabeau expressed himself thus, with elevated voice, and head proudly erect, his outstretched hands seemed as though seizing the power he so confidently anticipated, and while it impressed me with an indescribable terror, it imparted to me a sort of instinctive consciousness that no other than himself could preserve the court from the destruction with which it was

threatened. Still, as I reflected I could but see the total improbability of a man being selected as prime minister, whose private life had been so disreputable, and whose first political career had been marked by an open rebellion against the pleasure of his sovereign; or that the queen could ever be brought to endure a person who had so grossly insulted her. I saw all the difficulties of the step, and despaired, with reason, of the count's obtaining what he demanded. Mirabeau, whose penetrating eyes easily read all that was passing in my mind, continued, with the most imperturbable *sang froid*, "You see, my fair countess, your negotiation has little chance of a successful termination; you perceive that I shall not accede to *your* terms, and upon no others than those *I* have named will I join the royal cause. But what, in heaven's name, involves you in the affair? what interest can you have in the queen?"

"That of gratitude," replied I; "I remember only the ill she has not done me, while I thankfully cherish the recollection of the peaceful tranquillity I have enjoyed through her means."

"You have a noble soul," answered Mirabeau, "and I hope you may find your sentiments turn to your advantage."

He next proceeded to tell me all the idle gossip of the court; then entered into a long detail of all his intended proceedings against the queen, and took his leave amid my tears of vexation at thus seeing all my hopes fallen to the ground.

The queen expressed the most lively indignation when she heard from madame de Grammont of the terms demanded by Mirabeau, and declared she would rather die than admit such a person to her confidence; at the same time she thanked me for the zeal I had displayed, and which she should continue, as she said, to employ as occasion required.

About this time I received a visit from the marquis de Montesquieu, whose joyful countenance particularly

surprised me, after hearing, as I had done, from the maréchale de Mirepoix, of his having accidentally met the queen at the house of madame, when her majesty attacked him with much severity upon the new opinions he had lately promulgated, and had so harshly dealt with him, that he had quitted the room almost like a madman. His gaiety defied my powers of comprehension; at length, I ventured so far as to observe,

"You seem very happy, M. de Montesquieu; may I inquire the cause of such unusual exhilaration?"

"Yes, yes," replied he, "I am happy—happy after the Italian fashion, because I shall be revenged; you have, no doubt, heard of the cruel manner in which the queen has treated me, all proceeding, as I know, from the odious cabal by which she is surrounded; the Polignacs detest me because monsieur honours me with his friendship; but never mind, their turn will come."

"Why what will you do then?"

"*I* shall do nothing; but others have undertaken my cause, and it is time, too, that we were delivered of the mercenary herd who have preyed too long upon the very vitals of the nation, and Paris will, before many hours have elapsed, shake off the yoke for ever."

We were still talking when the baron de Sugère arrived quite out of breath.

"Oh! madame la comtesse," cried he, as he entered, all Paris is up in arms. A general revolt has taken place, and the populace, aided by the *Gardes Françaises*, have attacked the regiments of *Royal Lorraine* and *Royal Allemand*, while the prince de Lambesc has charged them from the Tuileries."

"And was he victorious?" inquired the marquis de Montesquieu, with much anxiety.

"Victorious! no!" replied the baron; "he was afraid, and actually drew back after having given a few sabre thrusts among the multitude, and I would wager all I am worth he is running for dear life to seek shelter in some barn or outhouse at Versailles."

I looked at M. de Montesquieu, whose countenance seemed lighted up with a radiant joy.

"This," said he, "is an event of no small consequence, and I must immediately confer with his royal highness respecting it." So saying, he quitted us.

"Now," said the baron, "one might be disposed to speak well or ill of this business, according as one felt disposed to join with the people or otherwise."

"But surely, baron," returned I, "you would never desert your sovereign to range yourself under the banners of rebels?"

"Why, upon my word I do not know what to say about that; I am old, and would fain pass the remainder of my days in tranquillity if I could; but consider, the court is at an end—utterly ruined."

"Say not so, it has still much strength."

"Physical strength it may have, but public opinion is for ever lost to it. This poor prince de Lambesc has made a pretty business of it; one would suppose his only aim to have been the proving what lamentable cowards the nobility of France could be."

"But that is far from being the case."

"The prince de Lambesc fled, as I tell you, at the first attack; the general impression is that all the nobility of France would decamp at the second."

I have before told you that the baron de Sugère was more remarkable for his wit than the goodness of his heart, and this last occurrence abundantly proves the truth of the assertion. By degrees, various persons arriving from Paris confirmed the intelligence of all the distressing events going on there, and while rebellion was rapidly spreading, terror and alarm took possession of every heart.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The duc de Cossé—Alarm and uncertainty—The flight of the Polignacs—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—Departure of the comte d'Artois—A serious conference with Mirabeau—Conspiracy against the queen—Versailles—Madame de Campan—Rencontre with Mirabeau.

One event followed another with such rapidity as almost to crowd hours into ages; the Hospital of the Invalids was forced by the multitude, who seized upon all the arms they could find there, and established a kind of volunteer corps, which has since become the national guard, and he who did not hasten to enrol himself into this new militia, left his patriotism liable to the strongest suspicion.

I remained all this while in a state of the most cruel alarm, hearing continually accounts as distressing as they were contradictory; from Paris I heard that the revolution was decided and victorious, while at Versailles they reported that strong and effectual measures were in agitation, which could not fail to put down the insurgents; the command of the troops had been given to the maréchal duc de Broglie, aided by the baron de Besenval, and the various regiments quartered near the capital received orders to march directly to the scene of action. On the 13th of July the duc de Cossé paid me a hurried visit at a late hour in the evening.

"All will be well," said he, "and we shall yet be saved. His majesty has acted with promptitude and decision, and ere this time to-morrow night the national assembly will be purged from those unquiet spirits which at present agitate it."

"Alas!" cried I, "why have you told me this? instead of sleep to-night I shall hear nothing but the report of cannon, and should I fall into a slumber, I

shall be startled from it by some frightful dream, telling me that the peaceful gardens of Luciennes are invaded by the rebellious host."

"Nay, my sweet countess, be not alarmed, I beseech you; nothing of a serious nature will ensue, I pledge you my word; the *canaille* will never think of offering any resistance, and the first sight of the glittering bayonets will be sufficient to put them to the rout."

The air of confidence with which the duke spoke infused a spirit of security and courage into my own mind; still, I was anxious to prevail on him to accept of a bed for the night at Luciennes, but this he was unable to accept from his being compelled to attend at Versailles, by reason of his rank, as colonel of a Swiss corps. The queen, who greatly esteemed him, had requested of him to be at his post during the whole of the 14th of July, as well as the night preceding, and all my entreaties were unable to keep him away. I went to bed, but found it utterly impossible to sleep; every little noise, whether real or imaginary, kept me awake, but everything remained quiet around Luciennes; the duc de Cossé had promised to dispatch a courier to me the first thing in the morning, and with a beating heart I awaited his coming.

My people, who were on the alert with the break of day, reported to me that several persons they had met on the road had assured them that all Paris had risen in a body and declared against the royal family, while a relation of one of my women came in with the intelligence of having been present at the taking of the Bastille, and the massacre of M. de Launay, M. Flesselles, and several others. This news, so different from what I had expected, threw me into an agony of grief, and I shut myself up in my apartments that I might weep more at my ease.

The solitude to which I was left not a little contributed to my fears. My salon was deserted, and of a large party I had invited to dinner, not one arrived,

and my only society was two or three neighbours, more terrified and apprehensive than myself.

Accounts of the most dispiriting nature were continually brought to me, and the hours seemed lengthened to ages until some further information could be obtained; towards a late hour in the evening M. de Mausabré joined my trembling visitors, and confirmed the fact of the Bastille having been taken, as well as all the horrors which had succeeded it; and from his lips I learned that a fatal hesitation had caused the court to renounce their intention of repelling the insurgents by force of arms.

"But," added M. de Mausabré, "I have another piece of news for you; the departure of the Polignacs is resolved on; indeed, such is their terror, that I scarcely believe any one of that party will have the courage to sleep another night at Versailles. They will speedily bid adieu to France, heaven grant it may be never to return."

"Are you quite certain of this?" said I.

"Perfectly so; when I left them they were busily employed collecting what cash and jewels could be carried with them, for these devoted friends never think of going empty-handed."

"Alas!" cried I, "wherefore have they delayed their departure until now?"

M. de Mausabré next proceeded to lay before me the critical state of public affairs; the necessity which compelled his majesty to bow to the conditions imposed on him by his enemies, as well as to consent to the return of M. Necker, who had been banished a short time previous, by advice of the queen.

On the 15th of July I received a visit from the maréchale de Mirepoix; she seemed to me ill and dejected; embracing me with more than her wonted affection, she exclaimed,

"Well, my dear countess, you see what sad troubles are befalling us; a new era has commenced, and we must give up all hopes of court favour and prefer-

ment. Alas! our poor king himself will soon be a mere cipher, dependent upon the people for the very bread he eats. What has become of the boasted courage of royalty? laid aside for ever with the rusty armour of his predecessors."

"But think you that our friends will not attempt to repulse force by force?" said I.

"Our friends are cowards," answered madame de Mirepoix, "mere poltrons; of that the occurrences of the past week have afforded ample proof; things are rapidly getting worse, for our opponents see our pusillanimity, and will not fail to take every advantage of it. You are, no doubt, informed that her majesty's favourites, the Polignacs, are on the move?"

"I am aware of that," replied I.

"But, perhaps," continued she, "you do not know that the prince de Condé, the duc de Bourbon, the duc d'Enghien, and the prince de Conti go with them?"

"Impossible!" cried I; "what have they to fear? wherefore should they forsake their king? Pardon me, madam, but I cannot believe so base, so disloyal a desertion; some designing person has imposed on your credulity."

"My dear friend," returned the maréchale, "what I tell you is the positive truth; this very night witnesses their flight, nor will they go alone, for the comte d'Artois makes another in the party."

At the conclusion of this speech I sunk back in my chair, pale as death; tears fell from my eyes, and I seized the hand of the maréchale.

"Is royalty then abolished in France?" said I.

"Why, really, that is more than I know, and the sight of all the princes rushing out of the kingdom makes me think of the silly sheep who leaped into the sea because their leader had fallen into it. Were I younger, I cannot answer for what I might do, for wheresoever the court is there would I be found; the

court with me is synonymous with France; but, alas, I am now old and wrinkled, and in vain should I look for a gallant knight who would carry off on his noble steed a distressed princess of my age!"

The trifling and heartless manner in which madame de Mirepoix gave this mixture of her youthful vivacity and graver presentiments, by no means accorded with my present feelings, and the departure thus announced of the comte d'Artois, his wife, and family, with all the princes of the blood, the eager haste with which those time-serving Polignacs fled from a king and queen, the latter of whom they should rather have died for than deserted, all appeared to me like a strange and horrible dream.

"You seem surprised," cried the maréchale, "'but after us the deluge,' as the late king used to say; these Polignacs and all the party have only pretended a regard for the queen so long as their own interest rendered it advisable, and have made all the profit they could by it; their reign is over, and they have been obliged to march out with all the honours of war, and have even contrived to obtain the positive command of their majesties for their leaving France."

"But the princes?"

"Why, I suppose the Polignacs managed to persuade them to join the party, not thinking it looked quite correct to decamp alone; they sought the pretext of merely following their betters."

"And what thinks the king of all this?"

"His majesty is now going with monsieur and the comte d'Artois to the national assembly, to make a sort of *amende honorable* in order to blind the good folks to the approaching emigration, but after nightfall they may look in vain for M. d'Artois.

In vain did I still feel credulous as to the veracity of the good maréchale's statement, my doubts were but too soon confirmed, for, on the 17th of July, the whole of the comte d'Artois's family, with himself and the greater

number of the courtiers, repaired to Turin, the other princes took the road to Brussels, while the Polignacs, with the prince de Lambesc, filed off towards Germany.

The next time I saw the comte de Mirabeau, he said to me,

"Now what do you think of my prudence in refusing to enlist under their banners? I should have been travelling post to Turin at this time had I done so?"

"And what are your present purposes?" demanded I.

"To arrange matters in such a way as to put it out of the power of favourites of either sex to rob the kingdom in the name of either king or queen. We shall institute wise and powerful regulations for the balance of power, employ the ill-gotten wealth of the clergy in paying all just debts, and endeavour to bring back those worthy apostles to the virtues of the primitive church."

"Monsieur still remains, does he not?" said I.

"He does," replied Mirabeau, "and the pleasure with which he saw the refugees depart might be construed into satisfaction at having the field left entirely to himself." These words recalled to me my last conversation with the marquis de Montesquieu, whose ambiguous hints I had at the time but very imperfectly comprehended; however, I did not disclose to Mirabeau what was passing in my mind, and he soon after left me to my own sad reflections.

Louis XVI., irritated and goaded as he was by the taking of the Bastille, was compelled to subdue his own feelings and humble himself before his rebellious subjects; but, upon his arrival at Paris, he encountered only the violence of the populace, and the angry, scowling looks of the citizens, who conducted him to the hotel de ville, where M. Bailly, mayor of Paris, harangued the unhappy monarch at some length upon his duties as a king. Louis XVI. listened with calm composure, which was only interrupted when the

glittering arms of the *gardes nationales* caught his eye; but, quickly recovering himself, he bowed to the audience and quitted them, apparently reconciled and restored to their good opinion.

From this moment the revolution was perfected; the meeting assumed a fresh character, or rather threw off all appearance of a regular assembly; the *salons* of the *noblesse* were invaded by the *bourgeois*, who insolently paraded through the apartments of those whom they would scarcely have presumed to address a twelvemonth back. My house was almost carried by assault, and my terror prevented me from making any exertion to repel the invaders. Among the most formidable on such occasions I shall cite M. Petion, a man of some talent and still more ill-nature; M. Manuel, who was for ever talking of humanity and benevolence, while he committed the greatest offences against each of those virtues; M. Barnave, a handsome and amiable man, led astray by violent revolutionary principles; M. de Laclos, who has so well described himself in his own romances; the comte de Genlis, an accomplished debauchée, who, perhaps, was not so bad as he was generally represented; and M. Robespierre, whose harsh, grating voice, and coarse, ferocious features had rendered him so great a favourite with the savage populace.

Although I was far from admiring one of these characters, yet I durst not evince my dislike, from a regard for my own safety, or that of the royal family. The queen, I know not for what reason, had forbidden me to communicate with her through the medium of the duchesse de Grammont. Her majesty had lately bestowed a large share of her confidence on her first lady in waiting, madame de Campan, to whom I was directed henceforward to apply in any case which should require her royal cognizance.

Among the revolutionary party I passed for an enemy of the queen's, so that, having no mistrust of

me, they openly avowed their schemes and intentions towards her, and I was enabled at all times to put her majesty on her guard against any threatening danger.

Early on the morning of the 5th of August, my women entered my apartment in a state of extreme agitation. "Madam!" exclaimed they, "we are surrounded by a set of bandits who are robbing and murdering the inhabitants of every château, after which they consume the building to ashes."

I arose, and in deadly alarm, began, as well as my trembling fingers would permit, to conceal my jewels, plate, and other valuables; every instant I expected to hear the fatal alarm sounded. I durst not venture to Paris from the fear of being murdered on the road thither; the next day brought me some relief by the information that the tale of robbers being near had been concocted only as an infernal scheme for inducing all France to take up arms, for the same terrors had been industriously promulgated even in the most distant and obscure provinces. The country once in arms was an excellent means of keeping the crown and magistracy in awe, and it was employed but too successfully.

In this manner we reached the beginning of October; those about the king were sanguine in their expectations of striking some vigorous and decided blow, which might once again adjust matters between the king and his people; we were still buoyed up in this hope when the *gardes du corps* conceived the design of giving to the troops of the line that fête, at once so unfortunate and memorable. It took place amid the shouts of the aristocrats, who read in the joy and plaudits of these martial men the guarantee of their monarch's safety; but, on the day following, a half-suppressed and threatening whisper went abroad, boding no good to the royal family, and a sort of gloomy and mysterious terror seemed to seize upon all the king's party; the revolutionists no longer abstained from uttering the most significant threats against the

queen even in my presence, and Petion unhesitatingly declared that her exile was necessary to the peace of France. Robespierre went so far that I could only conceive he intended an immediate attack upon the château of Versailles, during the confusion of which any crime might easily be perpetrated.

I felt sick at heart, and pretending a sudden indisposition, retired at an early hour to my chamber, where I summoned Georgette, (the *femme de chambre* on whom I could most confide, and who was very nearly my own size). I dressed myself in her attire, and wrapping myself in a large cloak and *calèche*, I drove in a plain carriage to Versailles, informing my servants, who wore simply an undress livery, that I was going to the maréchale de Mirepoix's.

When I reached the Place d'Armes, I feigned to be weary of the motion of the carriage, and recommending my servants to be in attendance just without the gates of the château, I alighted, and, taking the arm of Georgette, proceeded at once to the apartment of madame de Campan. It required some motive powerful as that by which I was actuated, to induce me to revisit this spot of my former greatness. How many remembrances assailed me as I entered that palace where I had once been absolute mistress! What was I now? A poor, forsaken creature, without fortune or friends, who thus stole into the château of Versailles, to save, if possible, her who had superseded me, and been the innocent instrument of my removal.

A more than usual courage and resolution seemed to nerve my mind, my step grew firmer, and my heart beat less heavily as I considered the aim and end of my coming; one fear alone possessed me, and that was the dread of being recognised by any person, for I must honestly confess I shrunk from being discovered thus stealthily entering a place where I had once been worshipped almost as a deity; neither would I willingly have provoked the malicious remarks and interpretations of those who would each have accounted for my visit after their own fashion.

As my first emotion subsided I had leisure to remark the various precautions adopted under the present monarch, which had been totally disregarded during the reign of his predecessor; watch-fires burnt upon the terraces, and the heavy tramp of the numerous sentinels struck heavily on my ear. Gliding silently along, and still holding the arm of Georgette, I made my way up a private staircase, which communicated with the apartments of madame de Campan, and knocking at the door, a female opened it, of whom I inquired whether I could see madame de Campan? I was informed that she was engaged, and could not be disturbed.

"Have the goodness," said I, "to let her know that mademoiselle Cécile Gérard is here, and particularly desires the favour of an interview."

The soubrette hesitated for a few moments.

"Your mistress expects me," said I, "and should you allow me to return without being admitted, it will be at the risk of your place."

I have generally found at court that a tone of command has succeeded with those in a subaltern situation, who are so accustomed to the servility of all who come to solicit favours, that they naturally take a person having the courage to address them boldly for some one of consequence; I found the justice of the remark in the present case, for I was immediately admitted, and the female, having requested me to take a seat, quitted me to deliver my message. She soon returned, accompanied by madame de Campan, who was not a little surprised at my unexpected visit.

The name of Cécile Gérard had been agreed upon between us as a kind of password which should at all times procure me admission into the castle. I was welcomed and conducted into an inner apartment, where we could converse without the dread of being overheard. We were no sooner alone than I related circumstantially all I had heard relative to her majesty, and I should ill-describe the powerful impression my narration appeared to make on my companion.

Madame de Campan accompanied me back to the castle-court, when we separated, she to apprize the queen of the facts I had just imparted to her, and I to return home.

I had desired my carriage to await me outside the gates of the château, and in order to reach the appointed place, I had to cross the space which separated the court from the outer boundaries; as I was hurrying rapidly along I encountered a man carefully enveloped in a large cloak, worn evidently less to defend him from the cold than to disguise his person; he wore besides a broad flapped hat. I might have passed him without any particular attention, had not a certain peculiarity of walk, and a tender manner of putting down his feet, convinced me that it was no other than Mirabeau; and trembling lest he should recognise me, I was endeavouring to draw my *calèche* more over my face, when a sudden gust of wind blew it completely back, and the full glare of a lamp striking upon my features revealed me at once to the count, who, approaching me, exclaimed, in a hurried tone,

"Madame la comtesse du Barri! what brings you here?"

"That is a question I may as well ask you," said I.

"That you may avoid answering a plain question; but it will not do, madam; and I once more inquire the reason of my thus meeting you in so strange a time and place."

"Perhaps," said I, (attempting a smile much against my inclinations,) "the same business which formerly brought me here."

"Very possibly, women are capable of anything; yet ——"

"And now, having replied to your interrogatory, may I, in my turn, inquire what brings the champion of the people disguised in a place, the inhabitants of which are the objects of his daily and deadly attacks."

"Oh, merely the same cause as that you were pleased to assign for being here; love, mighty love."

"That is a falsehood, M. le comte."

"And those words may be sooner said than forgotten, madame la comtesse."

"Oh, I do not fear you; your bark is always worse than your bite."

The count began to laugh, which is, indeed, the best thing any one can do who does not intend to take a thing seriously.

"Well then," said he, "I shall avenge myself by relating where you were seen."

"Do so, and I will tell who saw me."

"No, no!" replied Mirabeau, "that would not suit the plans of either;" adding, with an expression of more than usual seriousness, "let us pledge ourselves solemnly to silence; depend upon it, it will be to our mutual advantage."

"I quite agree with you," cried I, "and readily promise never to mention this night's meeting, unless you yourself set me the example."

"Farewell then," exclaimed Mirabeau, "I easily penetrate your secret, which, although a species of honourable treachery, will not avail those you come to serve; the opposite party is too strong to be overthrown by the imprudent generosity of even the handsomest woman in France."

As he concluded these words, which struck upon my newly-raised hopes, we separated, nor did Mirabeau ever, from that moment, either call upon me or keep up the slightest intimacy. He broke off our acquaintance, but he preserved an unbroken silence respecting our rencontre at Versailles; a proof of this was that his friends and colleauges still continued to speak to me without reserve or suspicion; and as Mirabeau himself had his own private game to play, he troubled himself very little as to whether I might involve others by any dangerous revelations. When I bade him adieu at Versailles, the coldness of the night had so completely benumbed me that I was glad to hurry to my carriage and bid my coachman drive with all possible speed to Luciennes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The 6th of October, 1789—Another robbery—A scheme for inducing the queen to become a voluntary exile from France—Displeasure of Marie Antoinette—The duc de Cossé refuses to emigrate—Abolition of the nobility—Mirabeau—The baron de Sugère emigrates.

A SEVERE cold, which terminated in a fever, was the result of my nocturnal visit to Versailles. During the period of my being confined to my bed I received a letter from the queen, which I pressed to my heart as a healing balm for all the sorrows I had experienced; yes, my gracious mistress vouchsafed herself to pen the thanks she deemed due to one who would have perilled life to save her; but alas! it was no longer the gay and brilliant sovereign of France who addressed me, but the unfortunate and persecuted Marie Antoinette. This precious billet I did not even allow myself to preserve, in the fear of its endangering its illustrious writer, who, with earnest thanks, expressed her conviction that she owed her life to my recent communication. I will not enter upon the horrors of the 5th and 6th of October; *you* were among the defenders of the throne upon that melancholy occasion, while *I* was stretched upon a bed of sickness.

The first intelligence I received of the distressing event was through Zamor, whom I had sent to Paris for the purpose of collecting all the information possible. This African appeared to have resumed all the natural ferocity of his kind, and the eager delight with which he related to me the sanguinary scenes he had witnessed, made me shudder to think that I had been, in all probability, nourishing a tiger in my bosom, who would one day thirst for *my* blood also; as yet, however, Zamor appeared all devotion to me, and only to detest the queen as having, in his estimation, usurped

my place at court; and I have ever found those in an inferior condition to ourselves, more rancorous and bitter in their recollection of injuries, real or imaginary, offered their patron than the person who had sustained the wrong.

I forbore to intrust Zamor with the secret of my good understanding with Marie Antoinette, whom, nevertheless, I sought by all possible means to clear from every imputation thrown upon her. This seemed greatly to annoy him, and he quitted me with a gloomy and threatening air, leaving me ample room for perceiving, amid all his professions of love and gratitude, nothing but the completest selfishness and desire to promote his own advancement.

Alas! my friend, one of the miseries of the times in which we live is to tremble at the sight of our very menials, to look upon them as being possibly one day our accusers, perhaps our judges. Zamor has been gradually habituating himself to all those crimes which harden the heart, and has become intemperate, profligate, and a gambler; nay, I have strong reasons for suspecting his fidelity. He still continues to enjoy the post of governor of Luciennes, although the salary has been reduced to 600 livres.

But what were *my* alarms or dangers to those experienced by the royal family! I learned that the king and queen had permitted themselves to be removed from Versailles as if to surrender themselves voluntarily into the hands of their gaolers. The moment I was sufficiently recovered, I made frequent journies to Paris, during one of which a considerable quantity of linen and wearing apparel was stolen from me; the robbery was effected through the connivance of a female domestic, whom I could only dismiss, without having sufficient proofs to bring her to the condign punishment she merited.

This was the second loss I had sustained within a very short period; and the necessity of replacing what had been taken from me, with the payment of many

debts which had accumulated, spite of all my economy, compelled me to dispose of a part of my jewels; for this purpose I applied to a rich banker, named M. Wandenyver, who, besides several large establishments in various parts of the continent, had a large branch bank in the rue Vivienne. This worthy man well deserved the confidence reposed in him, and undertook to convey such of my diamonds as I was desirous of converting into money to Holland; and, in the interim of finding a purchaser for them, he supplied me with the sum of 80,000 livres, which was still short of what I required to discharge my debts, and I was compelled to part with various articles of comfort or luxury ere I had freed myself from my pecuniary difficulties; but, in the unpleasant state of the times, it would have been highly impolitic to allow myself to be at the mercy of a set of irritated creditors.

The farther we advanced into the disastrous year of 1789, the more the horizon became overcast, thanks to the harangues and declamations of the factious. Some of the most dangerous men of the day even presumed so far as to make my drawing-rooms at Luciennes the rendezvous for their disloyal conversations; M. de Robespierre introduced to my notice the ferocious Marat, for the purpose, as he said, of obtaining his advice for the frequent nervous attacks with which I suffered, and I once ventured so far as to inquire his reason for pursuing the queen with so implacable an animosity. "Because," replied he, "her death is indispensibly necessary to the safety of the people; so long as she is in existence the king will never walk boldly in the constitutional path; her Austrian soul will never bend to exchange old prejudices for modern reforms, and unfortunate for us all would be the day which should witness her triumph; besides," added he, with a revolting smile, "the king might die suddenly, and, in that case, she might aspire to the regency."

This anticipation of the sudden demise of his majesty appeared to me to be of sinister import, and I

therefore related the expression to madame de Campan. I learned also, about the same period, that many of the best friends and well-wishers of Marie Antoinette, thinking to deprive her enemies of every pretext for annoying her, had suggested to her majesty the wise propriety of sacrificing herself to the good of her husband, by voluntarily withdrawing for a time to the court of the emperor, her brother; it being hoped that during her absence popular irritation would subside, and when once she was known to have left the king to the free exercise of his own reason and judgment, the many prejudices against her majesty would be set at rest.

It required no small share of courage to break to the unhappy princess this proposition of her friends. Marie Antoinette listened with a seeming calmness to the many arguments adduced in its support, but the burning tears which occasionally defied all attempts to restrain them, proved the violent passions which shook her soul. At length, she spoke. "And think you, gentlemen," said she, firmly yet mournfully, "that any paltry considerations for self shall induce me to quit my husband or my child? Who will watch over their safety if I forsake them? Who can feel greater interest in all that befalls them? Alas! what might not the violence of our mutual enemies attempt when it was once known that I had withdrawn from their side? and who will promise me even that I shall ever return to them? And shall I, the daughter of Marie Thérèse, fly like a convicted wretch before the base calumnies of my persecutors? 'twould be but to furnish them with fresh grounds for new persecutions, and to authorize increased malice on their part. No, my place is by my husband; my refuge must be in the arms and affections of all true Frenchmen, and my defence is the goodness of my cause; I will not meanly shrink from facing the worst that can befall me, and my enemies shall be compelled to admire the patience and fortitude of her they would fain frighten away. For you, gen-

tlemen, I thank you for the motives which I believe dictated the advice you have offered, and only regret you did not know me sufficiently well to have spared me the mortification of listening to it."

The duc de Cossé Brissac was among the number of those who had advocated this delicate path to public tranquillity, the duc de Liancourt, the comte de Montmorin, and the prince de Poix, were also urgent in its favour; the opinion of this latter, as well as the comte de Montmorin, was pressed with a degree of earnestness which drew down upon them the lasting dislike of the queen, whose displeasure was evinced upon every possible occasion. After the scene I have been relating to you—a scene, by the way, of which no person had the least suspicion except the actors in it, who all agreed to bury it in the most inviolable secrecy, but the duc de Cossé, who could conceal nothing from me, related it in nearly the words I have given it to you—the queen, after a short time spent in reflection upon what she had just heard, sent for M. de Montmorin and the duc de Cossé, and, after again censuring (but with greater mildness) the part they had acted, inquired whether the king was aware of what had lately passed. To this the duc de Cossé returned a prompt reply in the negative, for he had, in truth, never entertained such an idea, although he by no means felt equally certain of the prudence of M. de Montmorin; that nobleman, however, eagerly vindicated himself from all suspicion of having breathed a syllable of the late conference, adding, that the suggestion which had unfortunately given her majesty so much pain, had been originally conceived by himself and the duc de Liancourt, and that, by way of furthering the good intentions of their scheme, they had called the duc de Cossé and the prince de Poix into the council, but most assuredly nothing had been divulged, save to the illustrious object of their solicitude, who might content herself that the king would never receive the slightest hint from them.

The queen listened to this justification with apparent satisfaction, and then dismissed the party, saying, "'Tis well, my lords, you have not so far compromised yourselves and me as to have spoken of this wild and disloyal scheme to other ears than mine, to that may you attribute the absence of such punishment as my offended dignity would surely have visited your offence; go, and respect your queen better for the future."

The comte de Montmorin bowed with humility and withdrew, but the displeasure manifested by Marie Antoinette rankled in his heart, and, compelled as he was to bury his feelings in his own mind that he might not by any indiscreet revelations provoke the further anger of her majesty, his rancorous spirit aggravated each day the recollection of the unmerited harshness he conceived himself to have experienced, until he at length adopted revolutionary principles, and may be now seen foremost in the ranks of the queen's enemies.

Thus ended this ill-devised plan, which was never again agitated, for few would have ventured to provoke the already irritated mind of her majesty by any farther allusion to it.

The troubled state of the times came fraught with changes and reverses to many, and no class of persons experienced a greater share of them than the clergy, whose possessions were, by one particular edict, placed entirely at the disposal of the nation; this was signing their total ruin, and the various prelates were in the most pitiable state of distress. One man alone was sufficiently courageous to undertake their defence, and endeavour to procure some mitigation of so sweeping a clause, and this was the abbé Maury, whose eloquence, graceful address, and profound learning, were yet insufficient to overrule the many opposers of his clerical brethren; but the abbé Maury (who would have shone as prime minister) has since evinced a daring ambition which the possession of a cardinal's hat will scarcely satisfy; he is at this moment deep in

the confidence of the queen, with whom he holds frequent conferences at the Tuileries ; and were his firm and vigorous measures but adopted, France might yet escape the horrors which threaten her. But, alas! a fatal terror appears to have paralysed every arm, and those whose powerful energies might have saved their country exhibited only the sad spectacle of men rather swayed by obstinacy and self-love than patriotism.

While these things were going on I received an anonymous letter, couched in the following terms:—

"I am commissioned, madam, to express the general dissatisfation and surprise experienced at the conduct of the duc de Brissac. Is it fitting a gentleman of his birth and family to remain in France when duty and honour call him to take his place among those noble individuals who compose the court of the comte d'Artois? His delay in joining the honourable company exposes his reputation. Condescend, madam, to exert your influence with M. de Brissac, and show yourself to be his true and faithful friend by exhorting him to leave Paris immediately ; the necessity becomes so much the more urgent on your part, as you are accused of being the powerful attraction which leads him to remain in your vast city, when honour imperiously summons him to the banners of his prince. His absence cannot be of any length, for already does France evince evident symptoms of that change which will authorize his return ; and the writer of this is in possession of information which warrants him in promising you, that ere another three months the emigrants will return in triumph, to the utter and lasting disgrace of all those who have, like recreants, deserted the glorious opportunity now presented them."

I lost no time in showing this letter to M. de Cossé, who merely smiled, while he replied,

"Every person has his own peculiar notions of loyalty, and my own idea of the signification of the word is never to abandon the king in whatever difficulty he

may be placed. My place is by his side, and my duty is to guard his life as well as crown, even to the last drop of my heart's blood."

"I quite agree with you," answered I; "besides, emigration is an act it behoves a man well to consider ere he undertakes, and never should it be resorted to but in cases of the greatest emergency, and you may rest assured *I* will never quit Paris with my own free will."

"My beloved friend," said M. de Cossé, delighted with my enthusiasm, "we are then agreed upon the point which will, in all probability, influence our future lives; as for the insinuations contained in this base scrawl they are worthy of nothing but contempt, neither does the writer deserve to occupy one moment of our time; let us therefore consign both him and his letter to the oblivion they merit."

M. de Mausabré also held similar language, although he confessed the danger of remaining in Paris during the present critical state of things. The unfortunate marquis de Favras, through some inadvertence on the part of his friends, was suspected of being concerned in treasonable practices, arrested, tried, and condemned to death, in the most unjust manner, while monsieur was even compelled to attend at the hotel de ville to justify himself from all participation in what was termed the Favras conspiracy.

Madame de Mirepoix, from whom I learned this last piece of intelligence, observed, when relating it, "Monsieur has been accused of aspiring to the title of king, but it seems pretty evident he does not know how to support his dignity as a prince!" Madame de Mirepoix did not recollect how difficult it was for any person to walk safely in the present day.

The Jacobin club now became regularly organized, and rapidly acquired a gloomy and threatening aspect, while the national assembly pursued its labours relative to the formation of a fresh constitution; from that moment social intercourse was suspended, and the most intimate friends discussed nothing but the abso-

lute or restraining *veto*; nothing was talked of but the rights of man, politics, and legislature.

Amid all these cares and perplexities I sought to divert my mind and drive away care by giving occasional *petits soupers* to such of the higher class as still remained to partake of them. Alas! how little did these scanty assemblies resemble those convivial and joyous meetings Paris could once boast of. Now each guest eyed his neighbour with looks of doubt and mistrust, and the very jingling of the glasses would make us start as though we heard in them the tocsin which sounded the destruction of our devoted country.

One occurrence, which took place somewhat previous to the very disastrous times I am relating, I have omitted to mention in its right place, which should have been about the same period as the demise of the duc d'Orleans, I allude to the death of my old friend, the maréchal duc de Richelieu, whom I had latterly seen but very little of; he was completely worn out with the infirmities of old age, and terminated a career drawn out beyond the usual period allotted to man.

I was, perhaps, the only person who sincerely regretted him, for, spite of our many little quarrels, he had ever shown himself my zealous friend and partisan. His advice had always been mine for asking, and I never once had occasion to regret having followed it, and, while others seemed but to dwell upon his vices, I strenuously insisted upon turning the mirror, and contemplating the glorious picture of his victories in Germany and Port Mahon.

The next blow struck after the annihilation of the benefices of the clergy was the abolition of all the titles and honours belonging to the nobility; and for this purpose an edict had passed on the 5th of August in the preceding year, by which the nobles were dispossessed of all their rights and feudal privileges, upon the proposition (if I mistake not) of an obscure individual, named Matthieu de Montmorenci, who, but for this daring act, might never have been heard of.

This resolution was followed up on the 19th of June by an order for suppressing all titles, armorial bearings, heraldic ornaments, &c., orders of the Holy Ghost, St. Michael, St. Lazare, &c., &c., making an exception only in favour of the order of St. Louis for the sake of the military. We were all UNcountessed, UNmarchionessed, to the great delight of the *canaille*, who amused themselves with singing through the streets and under our windows in the words of Moliere, "Allons! saute, marquis!" while those titled persons, thus rudely divested of all save the appellation their parents would have borne had they been plain mechanics, heard themselves styled after the new manner of things with utter surprise and consternation; the duc de Fronsac became simply Vignerot, the de Coignys, who were not even suffered to adopt their family name of Franquetot, were known only by the simple appellation of Giraud, the duc de Bouillon was transformed into M. Latour, the family of d'Escars was known as the Messrs. Perruse, and the Rochefoucaults were styled "des Verts;" in fact, it was altogether a complete chaotic confusion which defied all attempts to arrange or comprehend it. The journalists, from a species of malice towards comte de Mirabeau, always mentioned him by his original name; thus in one of their writings, they say, "With your Riquetti at your head you have for the space of three days thrown all Europe in confusion."

An order was issued for effacing all armorial bearings from the panels of carriages, and for dressing domestics in the very plainest livery that could be devised; we smiled, but it was with bitterness of heart, for things were not likely to end here.

I believe I before mentioned, when speaking of the ci-devant baron de Sugère, that he had originally been an admirer of monarchy, but had changed to a democrat, and become a constant frequenter of the jacobinical clubs; however, his philosophy and love for equality disappeared directly it was necessary to reduce his

rules to practice, and he fell into the most extravagant paroxysms of rage when he understood that he was to be deprived of his ancient barony; he came to me almost choking with rage.

"It is utterly impossible to keep terms with them any longer," cried he.

"Why, my good friend," said I, "what has thus vexed you? Are you tired of the Jacobins and their clubs?"

"Yes, madam," replied he, "and with cause; the low-born wretches, whom I only kept at a proper distance by means of my title, now presume to treat me as one of themselves, and actually address me as plain 'Sugère.'"

"Perhaps," said I, "if equality be so essential to the well-being of these assemblies, it might have been more agreeable to you, baron, had the *canaille*, as you term it, been elevated to *your* dignity, and new titles been invented for such as had them not."

"Why, really I don't know," answered the baron, "if, upon such terms, every one of these disinterested levellers might not have been converted into a staunch royalist."

"Suppose you were to propose such a method of settling differences," said I, with a smile.

"I am afraid, madam, the jacobin club understands very little about a jest, and, for my own part, I only see my folly in having thus long delayed following the example of my betters, and removing to a more grateful soil than this; but to-morrow's sun shall see me far away."

The baron was as good as his word, but he received a very cool and ungratifying reception at Coblentz.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Civil constitution of the clergy—Preparations for the federation in the Champs de Mars—Day of its celebration—Madame de Campan—A rendezvous in the Tuileries—A mysterious visitor—M. de Maupeou—Extraordinary conversation with the chancellor of France—Forebodings.

The ruin of the nobility was closely followed by that of the civil constitution of the clergy, which gave rise to a violent schism throughout France; the greater part of the ecclesiastical dignitaries refused to acknowledge the legality of the new regulations; the pope was quickly instructed of this insubordination, and laid the rebellious prelates under an interdict, until they took the oaths required.

But, to return to the nobility, I was deeply vexed to perceive among the number of those who, while affecting to be guided by a zeal for their country's welfare, were, in reality, but gratifying their own private rancour and malice, the young duc d'Aiguillon, son to my old and worthy friend; in vain did I seek to bring him back to a sense of his error in persecuting those he was bound to support and protect; he refused to listen to me, and the sincere interest I feel in him for his father's sake, makes me more than apprehensive that he will go lengths which will subject him to unpleasant consequences upon the return of the comte d'Artois. The nobles should never forget that all they undertake to the hurt or prejudice of the king will infallibly recoil upon themselves, and already have those of our land felt the sad effects of their ill-judged intimacy with the third estate.

The duc de Cossé acted with more moderation and by far greater wisdom, committing no excess, and contriving, while he was the friend of all parties,

to be ever near their majesties, to whom, in the hour of peril, he showed himself one of their most faithful and devoted defenders.

Spite of the many terrors experienced by us at the thoughts of the pretended regeneration of France, I must confess I felt much curiosity to behold the preparations for the federation of the 14th of July, which was to be celebrated in the Champ de Mars, opposite the Ecole Militaire. At first the people demanded that a large amphitheatre should be erected in the immense space selected, sufficiently roomy to contain, upon an inclined plane, from three to four hundred thousand persons; but there was scarcely time for the undertaking, and, besides, the expense would have been enormous.

In a few hours after it had been declared impossible to gratify the populace, an immense crowd was seen approaching, armed with shovels, pickaxes, and various instruments for turning up the ground, conducting carts, barrows, sledges, &c. preceded by a band of musicians, bearing flags and banners, ornamented with various devices; it was, in reality, a band of volunteer workmen; the example soon gained ground, enthusiasts and cowards, young people of either sex, dukes, duchesses, military and civil officers, citizens, priests, and monks, all set to work; some dug the ground to procure the necessary materials for those who wished to employ them in forming a terrace of immense size, while males and females of all ages submitted to be yoked to the carts which conveyed the various things required by the workmen.

I quitted Luciennes in company with madame de Mortemon, the duc de Cossé, his father, and M. de Mausabré; we were all simply dressed, and on our arrival at the heights of Chaillot, we paused to admire the *coup d'œil* which met our gaze; from thence, descending to the Champ de Mars, (after experiencing much difficulty in crossing the Seine on account of the immense concourse of people hurrying over it,) we

were recognised by the assembled multitude, who hastened to offer us the honours of the spade and barrow, a distinction we were compelled to accept under penalty of passing for bad citizens had we refused. I was set to work with a hosier of the rue St. Denis, who, while helping me to pull the truck to which we were harnessed, contrived to sli half a dozen of his cards into my hand.

I was separated from my companions almost forcibly, and very quickly lost all trace of them in the dense crowd by which I was environed. The novelty of my situation, added to the violent and fatiguing nature of my employment, produced such a sudden faintness as compelled me to beg to be released from my occupation; just as I was casting my eager looks around, in the hopes of discovering my friends, I perceived a young and handsome man gazing at me with much curiosity; as our eyes met he advanced, and, with a respectful bow, begged to be permitted to escort me back to the party I seemed anxious to find. Alas! I could but ill-direct my new acquaintance where to meet with those I had strayed from. I therefore thanked him for his polite offer, but expressed a wish for his protection only to conduct me to the first fiacre we could procure, and to this he immediately assented; a vehicle was soon procured, and my unknown friend, having seen me seated in it, begged leave to see me safe to my own residence; and fearful of any farther accident from the enthusiasm of the mob, I agreed to his proposition. The coachman was directed to drive to my hotel in Paris, where I expected a large party (including those friends who had accompanied me to the Champ de Mars) to dine with me.

Although by no means pleased with the marked scrutiny bestowed on me by my present protector, I could but admire the fine regularity of his handsome features, as well as the liveliness and elegance of his conversation, which, equally with the finished politeness of his manners, proclaimed him to be of no ordi-

nary stamp. Unable longer to restrain my curiosity, and ever the creature of impulse, I inquired the name of the person to whose kindness I was so much indebted? to which the stranger replied by announcing himself as M. St. Just. The name brought to my recollection a book entitled *Organt*, said to be written by a M. St. Just; the poem in question was of the most libertine and immoral description, yet with a considerable share of talent, and the additional fact of the said work being from the pen of one of Robespierre's intimate acquaintances, convinced me my present companion and the author of *Organt* were one.

M. St. Just did not avail himself of my inquiry to address a similar question to me; nevertheless I did not think it right to let him depart in ignorance of whom he had so opportunely assisted; at the moment, therefore, of entering my hotel, I stopped, and reiterating my thanks for his kindness, begged he would ever hold the comtesse du Barri his debtor; he started with a pleased surprise.

"Is it then to chance," cried he, "that I am at length indebted for a gratification so long and ardently desired, the happiness of seeing you, madam?"

"If it be a pleasure," returned I, smiling at his warmth, "it is one which it rests with yourself alone to renew whenever inclination leads you to receive acknowledgments I shall never be weary of repeating."

M. St. Just bowed with an expression of the most ardent satisfaction, and withdrew. Upon entering my salon I found that as yet none of my guests had arrived. At a late hour came M. de Cossé, his daughter, and M. de Mausabré, who had vainly sought me amid the assembled multitudes of the Champ de Mars. I related to them my late adventure, and we passed the evening together with as much hilarity as persons can be supposed to enjoy who know themselves to be on the crater of a volcano, on the eve of an expected eruption. Still, upon this evening, our hopes had

somewhat risen from the arrival of information of the troops of his Sardinian majesty being about to march under the command of the comte d'Artois, whose known military talents and consummate bravery assured us of a certain victory.

Meanwhile the imposing spectacle of the Fédération took place, and more than realized the highest expectations that could be formed of it. I will not take up your time by any description of this fête; the various deputations of national guards from all parts of the kingdom, the variety of their flags, nor the innumerable host which covered the platforms they themselves had erected.

The president of the national assembly took his seat on the throne to the right hand of his majesty; to all loyal hearts this insolent usurpation appeared a downright sacrilege, which was only equalled by the celebration of mass by M. Talleyrand Perigort, bishop of Autun, the abbé de Montesquieu, general agent to the clergy, and the abbé Louis; while two hundred priests clad in white, with tri-coloured scarves, filled the steps of the altar.

From the general acclamations with which the place resounded, any person would have supposed that this day would heal all the wounds of France, but, unfortunately, it produced nothing more than vows of solemn and perpetual union, which were scarcely taken than those who had so bound themselves separated to form fresh cabals and kindle new strife. The persons of my acquaintance belonging to the court were decidedly opposed to every concession, and appeared never to have more highly estimated their grandeur than at the moment when it was about to be taken from them; and all compact with the revolutionists seemed, in their eyes, worse than any species of disgrace. Neither was a reconciliation desired by the revolutionists themselves, who dreaded lest, by stopping short in their present demands, they should lose all they had previously obtained. All mutual goodwill and under-

standing was banished from the contending parties, who rallied round the national assembly as the place where their grand struggle was to take place, and each day did the *ancien régime* come off losers in the deadly strife. Poor M. Necker found himself compelled to give in his resignation, which he did in the hope of being solicited to remain in office; but he was deceived in his expectations, for he was suffered to retire to Geneva without the smallest opposition.

This event was preceded by an event which, under Louis XV., would have endangered the safety of the whole nation, but was now executed with the most alarming facility—I allude to the dissolution of parliaments, which, although I witnessed with my own eyes, I can yet scarcely believe; and that very power which had so often banished sleep and rest from the eyes of the late king, disappeared before the simple mandate of the national assembly. Indeed, my friend, the disastrous state of the times seems to threaten us with the extinction of royalty itself by an equally summary process.

I received several visits from M. St. Just, whom I saw each day with increased pleasure, but, owing to a dispute between himself and the duc de Fronsac, (who, spite of his continued sufferings from attacks of the gout, was still much at my house,) our friendship was brought to a close; the fact was, M. St. Just assumed so high and mighty a tone towards the poor duke, that I could no longer remain neuter in the affair, and the severity of my remarks were by no means to the satisfaction of M. St. Just, who from that hour took every opportunity of placing me in jeopardy, by pronouncing me the most complete aristocrat he ever met with.

I was agreeably surprised by a visit from madame de Campan, who, after talking for some time upon indifferent subjects, suddenly exclaimed,

"My dear countess, could you oblige me by calling on me the day after to-morrow, about ten

o'clock, at the Tuileries; I will take care to be alone, and we might then discourse at our ease?"

"And why could we not do so here, where we have leisure and quiet?" said I.

Madame de Campan only replied by a mournful shake of the head, which made me much regret having asked so imprudent a question, for I could easily suppose I was not invited to such a rendezvous without some very important necessity.

That same evening I was informed that a strange gentleman desired to speak with me in private. I desired he might be admitted, and when we were alone, the person thus addressed me:—

"Is it, madam, your desire to remain tranquil and unmolested in these troublesome times?"

"Most assuredly," replied I; "nor do I believe myself singular in forming such a wish."

"Then," returned my unknown visitor, "to effect so desirable an object you have only to give those whose deputy I am a sufficient testimony of your love for your country and devotion to its interests as becomes a good citizen; a positive proof is required."

"Alas, sir," answered I, "for some time past it has been my only occupation and study to afford such proofs as you desire; my many sacrifices and privations are well known, and I am persuaded ——"

"More striking proofs of your real sentiments are required," answered the stranger. "You are aware of the spot, in the château of Versailles, where the late king concealed a casket of vast importance, and ——"

"Sir!" exclaimed I, turning deadly pale, "you are asking a singular question."

"Which seems not a little to alarm you," replied my interrogator, with the utmost *sang froid*; "it is evident, madam, that you are in possession of the secret I am desirous of learning; besides, my previous information tells me that Louis XV. confided this fact only to yourself, the chancellor, and the prince de Soubise; the latter is dead, and the former no longer able to recol-

lect any past event. The last time this casket was opened was when the late king placed in it a large packet, sealed with five large green seals, you standing with a taper in your hand to afford his majesty a light. You see that we are in possession of every detail relative to this mysterious affair."

"And he from whom you have learned it is a traitor, whose base conduct I should hate myself could I imitate."

"So much the worse for yourself."

"May I know from whom you come?"

The stranger stooped and whispered in my ear a name which I could have wished not to have heard, and which might have influenced me under any other circumstances, but nothing could shake my resolution upon the present occasion, and the unknown, finding that I persisted in my refusal, left me with a bow of respect, and a smile of such malignant import as made me shudder.

The casket in question, my dear friend, still exists, and was that in which the late king was used to preserve all those important papers and writings not intended to be seen by any eye than his own, or whose contents might compromise the safety of some august individuals, and I trembled at the bare apprehension of their existence having become known to certain parties. My principal indignation was directed to the chancellor, whom I could not help suspecting of having broken his solemn promise, and I resolved to avail myself of his recent arrival in Paris to satisfy my doubts on the subject.

The very idea of meeting my once affectionate *cousin* after so long an absence, and after such a complete breaking up of our former *friendship* and *confidence*, appeared to me to promise much amusement, and I already enjoyed his surprise at seeing me once again in his house.

I chose the earliest hour at which I could expect to be admitted to repair to the house of my ungrateful

relation. A Norman servant, who had never seen me before, inquired whom he should announce.

"Madame la comtesse du Barri," replied I.

The obedient domestic waited for no second bidding, but, ascending the staircase, opened the door of an apartment and repeated my name, while I took care to be sufficiently close to my conductor to prevent my *cousin* from refusing to admit me even had he been so inclined. The chancellor was sitting beside an enormous fire writing upon an ebony table.

The dull and motionless cast of his features did not allow me to judge how far my visit was disagreeable. He rose as I entered, and, pointing to an arm-chair, waited till I had seated myself ere he resumed his own, and when the servant had withdrawn, said,

"You must pardon me, my dear cousin, for having so long neglected letting you know whether I was dead or alive; but, in truth, your having adopted a similar line of conduct made me suppose it was a matter of very little import to you."

"Much obliged to you," replied I, "for your politeness, which well deserves that I should rise and courtesy for it."

"You may thank me for my candour if you please," returned M. de Maupeou, "for what is the use of our deceiving each other? What did you care for me or I for you when we could no longer aid each other's schemes? It was all very well so long as a sort of debtor and creditor account stood open between us, but when the king died we found the folly of keeping up an acquaintance that could no longer be conducive to our mutual interests."

"Quite right," replied I, "and to prove my accordance with your sentiments I will use no ceremony in stating that I am now here upon matters of business."

"You may command my advice."

I was about to open my negotiation, but a feeling of reluctance made me still hesitate, and by way of a little digression, I observed,

"How many events have taken place since last we met!"

"Yes, indeed," returned he, with the smile of a demon, "they have made a nice hand of affairs; what think you, madame la comtesse?"

"I think that could his late majesty return to this world he would be scarcely able to believe it the same he quitted."

"Nay, nay, cousin," said de Maupeou, maliciously, "it would excite no surprise in him to find his predictions verified; how often has he said to me, 'Oh! such a thing will last as long as I shall, but my successor will not have much peace for it.' The new ministry thought proper to dismiss me, my dear cousin, and when I was no longer by to protect the privileges of the crown, then commenced that warfare between a haughty and overbearing magistracy, and a court destitute of one character whose genius could save, or talents command respect; these two enemies, worn out in the combat, and wholly unprovided with resources, have sunk helpless and exhausted into the power of the third estate. The parliaments have just been declared defunct, and royalty will not long survive them."

"Do you really think so?"

"*Think!* I am sure of it. We have already no longer a king, but a mere automaton, who bears the name of one. Where is the regal authority? In any hands but his; and all this will, in the first place, lead to anarchy, and in the second to a fresh despotism."

"The king will triumph over all enemies," cried I, confidently.

"Be not too sure of that," repeated the chancellor, emphatically; "depend upon it, neither Louis XVI. nor his race will ever retain peaceful possession of the throne of France. No, cousin! monarchy is at an end, and we, who beheld it in all its splendour, shall yet witness its last expiring spark." As M. de Maupeou uttered these last words, the prophetic tone

in which he spoke struck heavily upon my ear, and I started back with instinctive horror at its too great probability. He continued, "You think I rave, and that my weakened faculties have already sunk into the whining cant of impotent old age; but trust me, good cousin, all I have predicted, ay, and more too, shall come to pass as surely as these lips have uttered it." Then, changing all at once to his usual sarcastic manner, he exclaimed, "Well, there is something flattering too in the knowledge that after me France will own no other chancellor; I, who have been the greatest, have also been the last."

"The last?"

"Yes, my fair cousin, the very last; I have lived long enough since I have seen the annihilation of those parliaments I strove so earnestly to disband, and my existence has even extended beyond their hatred and ill-will. Never will another parliament arise, phœnix-like, from the ashes of the old; and with this delightful certainty I am willing, at any hour, to yield up what remains of this time-worn frame. But why," pursued de Maupeou, looking at me with something like an expression of interest, "do you not emigrate?"

"Because," replied I, "I love Paris too well to be happy elsewhere."

"So much the worse; you would be safer in any place than this; but come, let us leave off all trifling and proceed at once to the business which brings you here, for I cannot believe affection has had much to do with it."

"I received a most singular visit yesterday," said I, scarcely knowing what to say.

"So they have been to you, have they," muttered the chancellor.

"Perhaps," said I, "you can partly guess the reason of my coming."

"I can, perfectly; but tell me, what did you say to them?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!" exclaimed M. de Maupeou. "Did your visitor then omit to set before you the immense advantages of revealing all you knew?"

"On the contrary; a thousand tempting offers were made me."

"I believed you more weak and yielding than you have proved yourself."

"In matters of whim, caprice, or even love, I may have appeared silly and wavering, but in affairs of gratitude I can be firm even to death. Would you have acted as I have done?"

"I would, but with a little more address. I freely acknowledged having once been a participator in the important secret, but found it convenient to forget every particular that could at all aid their research."

"My dear cousin," cried I, with my accustomed frankness, "how happy you make me; I was terrified to death lest you might embrace the present opportunity as one of avenging any fancied injuries you may have received from the royal family."

"Then you were a great simpleton, begging your pardon, madame la comtesse, to suppose that such a man as myself would for ever tarnish his former fame in order to revenge himself upon any one, either high or low; and because I laboured to procure the destruction of the *Robes Noirs*, must I necessarily hate my country, or be a disloyal subject? No, no! whatever I have done was always with the best intentions, and if they have not produced all the good anticipated, at least I may plead for pardon for all involuntary failures and mischances, and let my countrymen only do me the justice to believe their welfare was my first aim, and I die contented."

The chancellor uttered these last words with an air and dignity so unusual as disarmed me of all the angry reproaches I had intended to have addressed to him. We continued conversing for some time upon the events of the day, he approving much of all I told him relative to my proceedings, (although I carefully

concealed all mention of the confidence which existed between her majesty and myself) and blaming himself for not having adopted the same course. After a long *tête-à-tête* I took my leave, and my *cousin* and myself never met more. A few days afterwards he left his card at my door, and shortly after retired to his estate at Thuit, where he now is.

I quitted him much affected, for his presence but too painfully recalled the past, while his words gave me every reason to dread the future. A man possessed of his vast penetration and clear-sightedness, must undoubtedly be but too well able to judge of coming events by all the momentous scenes of the day, and his advice to myself to seek safety in another country filled me with the gloomiest forebodings.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Interview with the queen—The recovery of the casket of Louis XV.—Emigration—The maréchale de Mirepoix's farewell. A journey deferred—Explanation with M. de Laclos—An apparition—The stolen diamonds.

I AWOKE the next morning after an agitated sleep to prepare for my interview at the Tuileries, which had been fixed for ten o'clock. I was punctual to the hour, and having ascended a terrace from the gardens, I proceeded, as directed, up a private starcase, at the top of which was a door carefully guarded by a sentinel, who, eyeing me with eager scrutiny, inquired whom I sought? I replied that I was desirous of speaking with madame de Campan, first lady in waiting to her majesty. The *garde du corps*, who was evdently apprized of my coming, immediately offered

to be my escort, and I followed him almost mechanically, for a singular and unaccountable depression hung over my senses, nor could I for some time rally my spirits. Madame de Campan exerted herself to rouse me from my dejection, prepared me with her own hands a glass of *eau sucrée,* mixed with orange-flower water, and continued for some time to talk upon indifferent subjects, with the view of giving me time to rally ere she entered more explicitly upon the occasion of my visit. At length, when I had in some degree recovered my usual cheerfulness, she said, with an air of mystery, "Now that you seem more equal to the meeting, I will lead you where you are expected."

She rose, and motioning me to follow, we descended a flight of stairs, and entered an apartment splendidly furnished, at one of the windows of which stood a lady, apparently gazing with deep interest upon some object below. My conductor, having ushered me into the room, retired, and the lady, turning away from the window, revealed to me the features of the queen! At the sight I fell on my knees, but her majesty approaching, extended her hand with an air of dignified condescension, bidding me, kindly, "Arise."

"Alas!" cried I, respectfully kissing the royal hand, "how culpable have I been towards your majesty, but let me humbly trust that my present devotion may be received, and that the expressions of my entire attachment and loyalty will be accepted by my gracious mistress, who may command the heart of her who speaks; in life or death."

"Such sentiments have become somewhat rare," returned Marie Antoinette; "so that," continued that adorable princess, with a sort of melancholy gaiety, "you may reckon upon a first place in the general amnesty I shall shortly publish."

While the queen was speaking, I contemplated with admiring eyes that lovely countenance still so irresistibly charming, spite of the many cares which preyed upon her royal mind; and tears filled my eyes as I recol-

lected the ardour and enthusiasm which attended her first arrival in France. The daughter of Marie Thérèse evidently understood my feelings, for she said, mournfully,

"You see how sadly my motives are misconceived, and how cruelly my enemies have prevailed against one whose most earnest wish was to have promoted the happiness of France. I have been compelled to look for friends beyond this kingdom, and to seek that assistance elsewhere I had hoped to have owed only to my people; for yourself, I requested your presence here that I might intrust an important commission to your zeal."

"Your majesty may freely command me; I swear inviolable fidelity to whatsoever you shall desire."

"I have selected you, madame la comtesse, because I believed no one would be likely to suspect you of being in my interests. May I feel as well assured of your prudence as I do of your fidelity?"

I availed myself of this opening to speak of the casket of Louis XV., as well as the recent endeavours made to bribe me to disclose what I knew of it. The queen listened with deep interest to my recital, and when I had concluded, said, with a benignant smile,

"I thank you sincerely for so striking a proof of your prudence and devotion, which shall not go unrewarded; you must hold both the king and myself your debtors, and ere long we will acquit ourselves of the obligation. But you said the chancellor also participated in the secret, may I not fear——?"

Her majesty stopped, and I hastened to reassure her by repeating my recent conversation with M. de Maupeou.

"How ill have I known that man!" exclaimed the queen; "I never believed him capable of acting with so much honour and principle; but, alas! how hard it is to know where to search for our real friends. One thing I am resolved, that things shall not remain another four and twenty hours in their present situation."

I volunteered my services to accompany any person her majesty should appoint to go in search of the precious casket.

"That will not be necessary," replied Marie Antoinette, "and he whom I shall send will, when furnished with your directions, be fully capable of discharging the trust alone; besides, were you to be recognised by any ill-disposed person, your reappearance at Versailles might give rise to many dangerous surmises; but to proceed to the mission I would confide to you. I am extremely desirous of ascertaining the nature of the understanding which exists between the duc d'Orleans and the court of England, and there is a person in London who can satisfy me on this head; her name is Mrs. M—— N——, whose friendship towards myself is the only motive for her divulging the information she possesses, for she has invariably rejected every pecuniary recompense offered her. She will be delighted to form your acquaintance, and I make no doubt will grant to friendship those confidences she has hitherto but partially bestowed upon my emissaries, whose coarse and sordid offers have evidently displeased her. She resides at No. 7 Soho-square. I have written to engage apartments for you in the same house, and I know that she is anxiously inquiring when you are expected to arrive. I could wish you to set out in the course of December; you shall be furnished with letters to several important personages, who may facilitate your means of gaining the wished for information. Our ambassador, the marquis de la Luzerne, shall be apprized of the interest I take in all that concerns you, as well as the important service you are rendering me, and you may rely upon his most earnest endeavours to further your mission. Madame de Campan shall bring you the evening previous to your departure all the papers and documents requisite for you."

I again assured the queen how happy I felt at such an opportunity of proving my zeal and devotion, and,

that, if it would serve her majesty, I would even consent to pass for an *emigré.*

"And why?" inquired Marie Antoinette; "have you not done as others have, and emigrated in reality?"

"Because," replied I, "I cannot excuse any person for flying from those dangers to which they leave their sovereign exposed."

"Why do not all the world think as you do?" said the queen, in a tone of sadness, as her beautiful eyes filled with tears; "but the general idea of fidelity seems to be that it is unwise to demonstrate it until the frontiers stand between you and danger; yes, countess, I agree with you; our friends should stay with us in the hour of danger, and those who forsake us are either ingrates or cowards."

Doubtless this last expression was in allusion to the Polignacs and others who were once her bosom friends; but I durst not remark further upon the subject, and I contented myself with fixing the 20th of December, 1790, for my journey to England. The queen thanked me for the prompt compliance and alacrity I evinced with the most flattering condescension, and took leave of me in the most gracious manner; she rang, and madam de Campan entering, her majesty said, "The many and essential services rendered me by the comtesse du Barri deserve, and have my warmest thanks, and I am happy to have you, madam, as a witness of my grateful sense of them."

I threw myself again at the feet of this adored sovereign, whose hand I kissed and bathed with my tears. "Calm yourself," said Marie Antoinette, "and return home, my kind friend, ere our interview is discovered and misrepresented by the malicious. Adieu, madame la comtesse, we shall soon meet again."

I was about to retire, when, from beneath the window of the apartment in which we were, arose a clear and manly voice, singing in a low but clear and distinct tone the following words, which formed one of the verses of a popular romance:—

"Dans les jardins de Trianon
Je cherchais des roses nouvelles,
Mais hélas ! les fleurs les plus belles
Avaient péri sous l'aquilon.
J'eus beau chercher les dons de Flore,
Les hivers les avaient détruits,
Je ne trouvais que des soucis
Qu'humectaient les pleurs de l'Aurore."

We were still listening, when the queen observed, "'Tis a young man of about eighteen years of age, who comes every day and sings in the same place verses of different songs, each having some reference to myself; I fancied he might be poor, and have sent him money, which he has always refused, and I cannot doubt that this youthful musician employs this method as an assurance of his love for his queen. Yes, France, ungrateful country! one heart fears not to love his sovereign."

As Marie Antoinette pronounced these words in a tone of most thrilling sensibility, her eyes glistened, and her whole countenance was radiant with the delightful consciousness of finding herself an object of affection to one, if but the meanest of her subjects, and amid the hatred and persecutions by which she was surrounded, her feeling mind was soothed and comforted with the humble homage of even an obscure individual.

Madame de Campan at length drew me away and led me to her own apartment, where I rested for about a quarter of an hour, and then returned home, wondering and admiring the singular changes and chances of my destiny, which had thus brought me into the notice and confidence of my sovereign, spite of the immeasurable distance which but a short time since existed between us.

The next day madame de Campan came with an intimation from her majesty that the comte de Fersen, a Swedish gentleman, high in the esteem and friendship of the queen, had visited Versailles disguised

in the royal livery, in company with the maréchal de Mouchy, governor of the château, and, after a short search, had found the golden casket, which he immediately brought away, sealed with the maréchal's seal, and delivered into the hands of the queen, who, much gratified at obtaining possession of the important documents it contained, had sent to inform me of the circumstance as a small testimony of the confidence she reposed in me. Madame de Campan further told me that all the papers found in the casket had been consigned to the flames, with the exception of a very thick manuscript written in the late king's own hand, and which her majesty had reserved for her private perusal. The contents of this manuscript were well known to me, my dear friend, and when we have uninterrupted leisure I will communicate them to you.

I lost no time in expediting the necessary preparations for my journey to England, which I confided but to one person alone, and even then without explaining the real motive. You will, no doubt, easily guess that I allude to the duc de Cossé as the friend to whom I imparted my intention of crossing the Channel, and most unwelcomely was the intelligence received. M. de Cossé strove by every argument to dissuade me from a scheme, which, as I represented it, had its origin in a mere love of change, and a desire for novelty. I might have vindicated myself by the example of his own sex, who were hurrying in crowds to England; indeed, my male acquaintance were now reduced to a very slender number, for of the crowds I had once known, most had followed the passion for emigration, according as they were either craftily led or violently alarmed into taking such a step; for from the first breaking out of the emigratory fever, the receipt of anonymous letters, spindles, distaffs, monks' cowls, lampoons, epigrams, were all employed as means of persuading or terrifying the French nobility out of their native land.

The maréchale de Mirepoix called on me about this

time, and embracing me according to her usual custom, exclaimed,

"Do you know what a silly thing I am going to do? I am about to emigrate! for really I have been so tormented and persecuted that I can no longer endure it; besides, in addition to the opportunity I thus make of evincing my loyalty and attachment to the French court and family, I shall be enabled to escape the importunities of my creditors, who will not long afford me the privilege of directing my course whithersoever I may please; since such *canaille* have been allowed to consider themselves our equals, really they have not granted me one hour's respite; so, my dear countess, do come with me, and we will make one expense answer for both."

I smiled while I replied that for the present I was bound to France, and that reasons of weight and importance prevented my accepting her proposition.

"I understand," returned the maréchale, "some tender *liaison* keeps you here, but remember, my dear friend, that affairs of the heart can be as easily carried on in Germany as France."

"Still," said I, "I shall not quit a certainty for an uncertainty."

"Well, then, I leave you to your choice, but, for my own part, I shall set out without delay; I owe such a proceeding to my name and family, and, no doubt, my conduct will procure me an order on the treasury for a good round sum, with which I shall return next year freed from all pecuniary difficulties, and ready to commence a fresh career."

This was my last interview with madame de Mirepoix, nor do I rightly know whether she is still in Paris, for the conversation I allude to took place but a very few days since.

On the 15th of December, I again saw madame de Campan, who came to me before I had left my bed, "Your journey to England," said she, "must be delayed for a while on account of the person you were

to have met having quitted London unexpectedly for Portugal, where she will remain for two months; this circumstance has entirely deranged the plans her majesty had formed."

This disappointment vexed me much, for I had ardently longed for the moment, when, by acquitting myself satisfactorily of my commission, I might have proved my sincere devotion to my queen. However, I could now do no more than return for answer that I should at all times be at the disposal of her majesty, who might depend upon my ready zeal under any circumstances. My next business was to account to M. de Cossé for so abruptly abandoning a scheme I had hitherto indulged with so much pleasure. I easily persuaded the duke that I had merely resigned my wishes to his solicitations, and this explanation was received with a gratitude which almost reconciled me to the necessity which dictated it.

While my journey remained thus undecided, I determined to fix myself at Paris; I accordingly established myself there on the 20th of December, the period at which I had intended to have started for England, and immediately such of my friends as the political tempest had not dispersed, hastened to express their delight at still keeping me among them; included in the number of my visitors was the marquis de Guichard, for whom I entertained the greatest regard, although I saw him but seldom; taking me one day aside, he said to me,

"What have you done to offend Messrs. de Genlis, de Laclos, and those who form the Orleans party."

"Nothing, that I am aware of," replied I.

"They seem much displeased with you, and I greatly fear their enmity may lead to something fatal; pray endeavour to clear the matter up with them, it is really necessary for your safety you should do so."

I did not intrust M. Guichard with the fact of my having perceived a very striking connection between

the ill-will of the persons alluded to, and my refusal to grant a favourable hearing to the conversation relative to the casket of the late king. But was I to submit to be punished for my upright and candid dealing? On the very next evening I went to the opera, and perceiving M. de Laclos in the box of madame de Rosamel, I beckoned to him, and he instantly obeyed my signal.

"What have I done so criminal," inquired I, "that you consider yourself justified in evincing so much displeasure and animosity towards me?"

"Any one in my place," replied he, "would affect ignorance of your meaning, or deny the truth of your charge altogether; but I will act with greater sincerity, and confess that I am very angry with you indeed."

"I could not possibly have acted otherwise than I have done," said I; "tell me, what should you have done in my place?"

"Conducted myself like a woman of good sense; the part you have chosen is perfect folly, and you will too late find the absurdity of it. Your party is rapidly falling lower and lower, while ours is daily rising in fresh strength."

M. de Laclos essayed all his eloquence to win me over to his side, but I stopped him from annoying me with any propositions, by explaining to him that the casket of the late king had been withdrawn from its hiding, place by order of Louis XVI., who had, with his own hands, destroyed every paper it contained. M. de Laclos bit his lips.

"And, no doubt," said he, "you have been well paid for your silence respecting it."

"No!" replied I, indignantly; "any mention of recompense would have been an insult my gracious sovereign would never have offered me."

"Wonderful! you will finish, no doubt, by something heroically grand."

"That is to say I shall end where you begin."

This retort put the finishing stroke to M. de Laclos's ill-humour, and, with an air of constrained gallantry, he bowed and quitted me.

An hour afterwards, as I was sitting alone in my box, a knock at the door induced me to rise and open it. Gracious heaven, my friend! what calamity awaits me? It was he! my unknown, but too punctual friend, the mysterious genius who had so fatally predicted the events of my past life, and promised to visit me once again on the eve of my departure from this world.——At the horrid sight I fainted, and when I regained my senses I found myself in the arms of the duc de Cossé and M. de Mausabre. * * * *

* * * * *

* * * * *

My friend, I am interrupted by the intelligence of a most serious calamity which has befallen me. I learn that during the past night, the 10th of January, 1791, some robbers, profiting by my absence, and aided, no doubt, by the Swiss servant to whom I had intrusted the care of Luciennes, have stolen the whole of my diamonds and other articles of value left there, as in a place of greater safety than Paris was likely to prove during the present troubled state of things. The amount of what I have thus been deprived of cannot be less than 500,000 crowns.

Adieu, my friend, I go to see what can be done.

THE COMTESSE DU BARRI.

Jan. 11, 1791.

APPENDIX.

The following statement is copied from the Times Newspaper of the 27th of February, 1830. It refers to the statues mentioned in chapter x. of volume iv.

" Nearly three years ago a suit was instituted by certain persons, stating themselves to be the heirs or representatives of the celebrated madame du Barri, against the minister of the king of France's household, to recover possession of two statues in the Musée d'Angoulême, representing this remarkable woman, one as Diana, the other as Venus. The claimants not being able to establish their rights, failed in the attempt to recover the property in question. The indemnity under the Emigrant Iudemnity Law, devolving to those entitled to her property, has just become a subject of litigation before the royal court between two classes of claimants, one as descended from Jean Jacques Gomard, father of the countess, and the other as the representatives of Anne Becu, her mother. The judgment of the Court de Première Instance in favour of the claimants under the mother, gave rise to an appeal by the adverse party, which came on for hearing on Monday. It appeared from the pleadings and documents adduced, that one fact alone was clearly established, namely, the birth of madame du Barri at Vaucouleur, but the name and quality of her father were not proved. In one certificate of baptism she was shown to have been born in 1743; in another, which was probably fabricated on the occasion of her marriage with the comte du Barri, she is represented as the daughter of Jean Jacques Gomard and Anne Becu. This certificate, however, does not state her parents to have been married, neither, indeed, could they have been, for J. J. Gomard was in holy orders. At the time of this marriage a certificate of his death, in the year 1748, was produced, when, in fact, he was still living. His death actually took place in the year 13 of the republic, at the Hospice des Vieillards, in Paris. Under these circumstances the Royal Court confirmed the former judgment, and decreed the property to be distributed among the relations claiming under the mother.

THE END.

WORKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED

BY

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND CO.,

AVE-MARIA LANE.

I.

Now publishing in Volumes, 12mo., price 6*s.* lettered, 18mo. price 3*s.* 6*d.* per volume.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

A Collection of the most Instructive and Amusing Lives ever published. Written by the Parties themselves. With original Introductions and Sequels.

Both general and particular Title-pages are supplied, so that any Life may be obtained complete, separately; a Portrait of each Writer is given whenever a sufficiently authentic likeness can be procured.

Besides other advantages, this series will include cheap editions of many scarce and curious works, which cannot at present be obtained without considerable trouble even at high prices.

Volume 1. Colley Cibber.—2. Hume, Lilly, Voltaire.—3, 4. Marmontel.—5. Robert Drury.—6. George Whitfield, James Ferguson.—7. Mary Robinson, Charlotte Clarke.—8. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Prince Eugene of Savoy.—9, 10.—Augustus Von Kotzebue.—11. John Creichton, William Gifford, Thomas Ellwood.—12. Lewis Holberg.—13. James Hardy Vaux.—14, 15.—Edward Gibbon.—16, 17. Benvenuto Cellini.—18. James Lackington (with his Confessions).—19. Theobald Wolf Tone.—20, 21. Margravine of Bareith.—22. Bubb Doddington.—23, 24. Goldoni.—25, 26, 27, 28. Vidocq.—29, 30, 31, 32. Madame du Barri.

"It was a happy idea which led to the incorporation of all the most nteresting Lives by the subjects themselves in one uniform series of volumes."—*Atlas.*

"No description of reading comes so near works of fiction and fascination as biography; and of all kinds of biography, autobiography, written with talent, and in the spirit of frankness, is at once the most delightful to the general reader, and the most instructive to the philosopher who studies the springs of actionin human character."—*Scotsman.*

"A well-imagined and cheap publication, valuable alike for the man of letters and the general reader."—*Globe.*

"There is something charming in any individual's life of himself; but so great a variety of autobiography, and in one work too, will form an ornament to our literature, which, as we admire, we shall wonder we have been so long without it. The neatness of this collection—the well-written introductions and sequels (carrying each life down to the death of the author)—the spirited heads of several autobiographers; and, above all, the cheapness (a volume of 340 close printed pages, for instance, for 3*s.* 6*d.*) are high recommendations."—*Tyne Mercury.*

II.

THE PICTURE OF INDIA,

Exhibiting in a brief, yet clear and graphic manner, the Geography, Topography, History, Natural History, Native Population, and Produce of that most interesting Portion of the Earth; with a particular Account of the European Settlement, with the present State of the British Territories, and an impartial View of the Indian Question, with reference to the impending Discussion on the renewal of the Charter. In two volumes. Illustrated with several Engravings of Scenery, Costume, Productions, &c.; also a Map, price 16*s.*

"We must say there is an elegance, if not a splendour of decoration about these volumes that very properly corresponds with the ideas of magnificence, which we usually associate with the name of India. The contents are worthy the beautiful framework in which they are embraced; and, if we mistake not the public taste, the 'Picture of India' will supersede every competitor that has arisen, or that is likely to come into the field."—*Monthly Review, June.*

"The 'Picture of India' will survive the immediate occasion which prompted its production, and take its place as a book of valuable information among works of permanent interest."—*Monthly Magazine, May.*

III.

THE SPECTATOR,

Corrected from the Originals, with a new Biographical Preface. By N. Ogle, Esq. In eight volumes, with Portraits, engraved by E. Finden, price 2*l.*

"It is with pleasure that we see in a new, commodious, cheap, and attractive form, a work which is destined to please and instruct as long as the English language lasts. The Spectator, with an excellent original Preface, replete with information; an Index to the Writers of the various Papers; Portraits; illustrative Notes; and, in short, every thing which can make an edition popular, is a work that we cannot commend more highly than it deserves."—*Literary Gazette, No. 532.*

IV.

THE VILLA AND COTTAGE FLORIST'S DIRECTORY:

Being a familiar Treatise on Floriculture, particularly the Management of the best Stage, Bed, and Border Flowers, usually cultivated in Britain. To which are added, Directions for the Management of the Hothouse, Greenhouse, and Conservatory, with the different Modes of Raising and Propagating Exotic Plants; interspersed with many new Physiological Observations. By James Main, A.L.S. Price 6s.

"We strongly recommend this work. Much practical information of a useful kind is conveyed in simple and intelligible language, and the art of gardening is very properly kept in due subservience to the science of botany."—*Atlas.*

V.

In a neat pocket Volume, the seventh Edition, with Views of the Menai Bridge and Conway Castle, engraved by E. Finden, and Maps, price 8s. bound,

THE CAMBRIAN TOURIST;

OR,

POST-CHAISE COMPANION THROUGH WALES.

Containing Cursory Sketches of the Welsh Territories, and Descriptions of the Manners, Customs, and Games of the Natives.

VI.

In 18mo., fifth edition, revised, price 5s. cloth,

THE SECRETARY'S ASSISTANT;

Exhibiting the Various and most Correct Modes of Superscription, Commencement, and Conclusion of Letters to Persons of every degree of Rank, including the Diplomatic, Clerical, and Judicial Dignitaries: with Lists of Foreign Ambassadors and Consuls. Also, the Forms necessary to be used in Applications or Petitions to the King in Council, Houses of Lords and Commons, Government Offices, and Public Companies: with a Table of Precedency, and Abbreviations of the several British and Foreign Orders of Knighthood.



